

JANUARY 1915 * 15 CENTS

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE



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Stories** *by*

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No. 4

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 20

JANUARY, 1915

NUMBER 4

IN EXILE

—BY—

GRACE
MARGARET
GALLAHER



Author of "Sally," "A Singer of Songs," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

RANGE slid off his horse and started up the trail. He was bitter tired, but so was his horse, and then, too, he was bitter cold. He had been riding endless hours, and still he was at nowhere. He pondered the trail, as well as he could in his bruised, weary mind, if it were always so long, of such bewildering twists.

A touch like the sting of an ice wasp nipped his cheek. Snow? Ridiculous, the first of November! He plodded along hopefully, his mind filled with swarming memories; long-dead scenes, buried forever he had believed, stirred, clothed themselves with life, trooped before his inner eyes.

He saw himself at the red farmhouse back on the Hudson, thudding about the raftered attic with his brothers on a rainy day, or stretched flat in

the grass above the trout brook where the light flickered greenly gold. He saw Rose, sweet as her name, smiling up at him before she was whirled away into the blackness that now hid all that belonged to his youth; and Josie—why, he had not thought of her in years, he could not remember her other name, even, yet he had owed his life to her the year he had broken his leg in the cañon. And Fred, her brother—he was still in the cañon, deep down in the gorge, good little Fred! And Bill—the Indians got him; and Jim and Dick and all the others of those first wild, strange years, all gone one way or another; only Clem over at Dode's Crossing left.

At the memory of him, waiting on ahead, Range shook himself free of the web of dreams, faced his brain away

from this last red week of disaster, and quickened his heavy steps stalwartly.

George! It was snowing, small, ice-edged flakes that bit. Snow in these mountains, even so early, was no fun to buck. What had gone wrong with the trail, anyhow? He slipped often on loose stones, and he could hear a rain of them from his horse's hoofs. Could it be he had taken the wrong turn at Thieves' Fork, what with the darkness and the hurry of his mind? If he were headed right for Dode's, by now he should have reached old Kench's cabin. He peered through the black, soft night to seek a point of light twinkling out from the old prospector's. Just thick darkness everywhere.

He stopped to grasp the situation solidly, and felt again the wet sharpness against cheek and forehead. Could he be on the abandoned back trail where last spring Sheriff John and Spanish Louie had been held up by Indians? What if he were? Go back to Circle Mills? His body thrust itself forward sharply, instinctive to the fierce "no" of the will. Try again at Thieves' Fork? He couldn't find it now in the night. Push on, that was the word—till he dropped. At Dode's, friend, fire, purse waited for him. And beyond—the whole world overseas, South America, the Islands, China—He pulled himself together, drew up on his horse, which snorted protests, and went on.

He wondered what time it might be. You couldn't tell nowadays, since dark sifted down so early. It seemed the swing around the clock since the last line of light had glowed in the sullen west, but likely it was only nine. All in a moment he was ravenously hungry. Breakfast, his last meal, had been back in the dawn. Should he light a fire to warm the little he had in his saddle pouch? He secured his horse by throwing the bridle forward over its

head, struck a match, and looked about. Already the trail was white, every clump of sagebush bent under a wet load, the stunted trees were sodden. Abandoning the idea of a fire, he opened his pouch, found some bread and cold meat, and, leaning against his horse, whose steaming body warmed his cold one, ate in swift gulps. Haste gripped him, a desire stronger than for fire or food, to reach the end of his journey.

He mounted and was off, wary of rolling stones and holes, certain now that this was the wrong road, about which he remembered hazy stories of its wildness and the Indians who still prowled through it.

"There won't be many Injins to-night," he told his horse, then winced at his own voice echoing strangely in the hush.

The cold ate into his bones. He leaped down again, beat his arms against his side, and once more bored ahead doggedly. The struggle kept the blood moving in the chill alleys of his body. His brain, fagged to the point of madness, yet tormented to work, swung back and forth ceaselessly, over the beginning of his life and its dolorous ending, for he could not clear himself from the idea that this was the end. He had been a friendly, likable little chap, wishing well to every one; he had been a friendly man, actively helpful, too; yet here he was fleeing over the mountains, an exile from among his fellows.

After a long time—Range could not judge how many hours—he seemed to make out a light ahead; then he was sure he saw it, dull and low, but unmistakable. All his drowsing powers quickened and tightened. He left his horse by the trail, and, secure that the slight wind was from the camp to him, he began to crawl toward the spark, his muscles corded tensely, his hand on his pistol holster. He feared, yet he

must know. Slowly the light showed itself as a low fire burning against some solid background, and that, too, outlined itself as the three sides and broken roof of a ruined cabin. Next a figure grew before him—a woman seated close to the fire in the angle of two of the walls, cooking something. She was wrapped in a long, hooded cloak, and her face was bent low over the fire.

How in the name of miracles came a woman on this trail, alone, at night? Range stared till his glance drew hers like a magnet. She raised her head and looked out into the dark. Her face was young and small and sweet, yet it bore a look tragic to youth, as if its owner had worn through such fear and pain that only great weariness was left in her. She listened, her body drooping, yet intent, sighed a long breath that raised the cloak over her bosom, and then lowered her head once more to the fire. She drew from it a bottle heating in its depth, shook out some drops on her finger, tasted them, and put the bottle, its end tipped, under her cloak, all with the care of a woman rocking beside her own cabin fire.

"Good Lord, a baby!" Range muttered, and stepped forward into the light.

The woman flashed out her hand with the speed of a sure shot, the big blue barrel of a pistol shining in its grasp.

"Stay there!" she warned, in a curiously unexcited voice. "It's loaded!"

"Don't shoot!" Range was as quiet as she. "I'm white, an' lost. Can I warm up at your fire?"

"Come on!" her weapon steady on him still.

"I'll get my horse." He was off, slithering down the trail.

She was in the same position when he came back, only now the empty bottle lay at her side and the pistol slack on her knees.

"Where's your horse?" he asked her sharply.

"Dead, back there." She pointed over her shoulder into the black void.

"Where are they—your party?"

"Gone," dragging voice met sharp one without hesitation.

Range pondered this strange answer unsuccessfully. "You got a baby there?"

"Yes."

"Yours?"

"No."

"Whose?"

"I don't know."

He stopped as abruptly as he had begun. He could not question anything so down to the dregs of resistance; instead, he told her gently:

"I'm afraid I've eaten all my bread, but I've got bacon left. That'll taste good."

"I got bread." She reached along the ground and drew up a canvas bag from which she shook out some food. "There's bacon an' milk an' sugar an' coffee. We could make us a drink." For an instant a flicker of life thrilled her voice, then she ended dully: "But we haven't any pot."

"Fine!" he cheered her. "You'll see."

He hunted up broken pieces of the cabin floor and piled them on the fire, where they blazed up into a ruddy heat.

"Feels good, don't it?" watching the shine of it flush her wan face. He whittled out forks on which he skewered pieces of bread and bacon. "Got a hand for that?"

She took one in each hand, holding them to the fire with her listless intensity. Next he brought a tin cup from his saddle, filled it with water from his canteen, and stirred in coffee. The girl did not appear to see what he was doing, yet she told him:

"I got water, too." Her voice under its weariness was of a lovely softness.



Range stared till his glance drew hers like a magnet.

He whittled more forks, and, seated on the other side of the fire, toasted more bread and bacon. Neither spoke. The baby in her lap slept without a sound. At length Range leaned across to her.

"It ain't the clearest I've drank, but it's coffee."

She took the cup brimming with thick black liquor, and drank in thirsty gulps.

"The rest's yours." The hand that stretched the cup to him was slender

and unmarked by work, not the hand of a ranchman's or miner's woman.

"I don't want it," he protested. Suddenly he smiled into her eyes, and, as he did it, he realized that this was the first time in all the week he had so relaxed.

"Take it, please. I'll feel bad if you don't," she pleaded, and she, too, smiled, and all her little, pallid, drawn face flowered out into sweetest bloom.

So he drank, and together they ate the hot bacon and bread.

"Gives you more grit, don't it?" Range coaxed gently for talk, yearning for it now after the dead hours of his past desolation.

"It was real good, all o' it," softly.

"You'll do well to sit different," he went on. "Keepin' one position's awful stiffenin' in this cold."

"If you could take the baby."

Range laughed out shortly. "I don't know as I ever had one o' those animals in my hands," he protested. Yet he took the shapeless bundle with clumsy tenderness, holding it in his outstretched arms like an offering borne to the gods. "Ain't much of a heft. What age is it?"

"I don't know," vaguely, jumping to her feet with a light ease that made his concern foolish. She walked about the fire twice, shaking her skirts and refolding her cloak about her. "Give him back, now." This time she sat down on his side of the fire.

As if that were a gentle invitation, he moved along beside her.

"When your folks comin' back?" He must know something more of her; curiosity smarted in him.

"I don't—know. I'm goin' to them."

"They didn't clear out from you here!"

She explained without resentment, patiently. "My horse stepped in a hole an' broke his leg. I wasn't ridin' him careful enough, an' theirs were both near played out. They couldn't make the place they aimed for—if they took me, an' there was the baby, too."

"How many of 'em? Were they men?"

"Just two men."

Range cursed them in a great oath. "They ought to be burned by the Injins! Hangin's too good an end for such hounds!"

"It wasn't snowin' then, an' 'twas light," she defended them, in her gentle, despairing voice, "an' they had to get on fast."

"I bet they did! That's the kind that travels in a hurry." Then he remembered his own haste, and winced at the raw wound.

"Where'd you pick up the baby?"

"They came into our camp two nights ago, the mother an' it, an' the mother—just—lay—down—an' died—" For the first time her voice broke.

"Squaw?"

She nodded. "The baby's white, an' real pretty." She rubbed her hand over her cheeks where the tears wetted them. "We got milk at a ranch, but, when we separated, of course I took it. I thought I'd maybe find a home some place for it."

Range stared at her in open bewilderment; the mosaic into which he tried to fit the pieces of her story made so wild a pattern, or rather no pattern at all. Who were "we"? Where were they going in such cruel haste? How came she to be with two men? What were they, to abandon a woman? The most amazing part of the business was the girl herself, young and soft enough to have wept herself into a frenzy over her desperate state, yet enduring it with the lethargy of age. Then another idea caught him. Who was he, to sit in judgment on any man or woman? She had made no question of him whither or whence.

Just at that, the girl lifted her eyes to his, large, dark, gentle eyes, with a trouble always deep in them.

"You're good to me," she said, with shy sweetness.

"I guess everybody's good to you," forgetting the men he had just cursed.

"Not all. They don't feel they have to." Some profound meaning lurked in the words.

"My name's Range." It was his way of answering that, giving her his confidence. "I was raised in Ulster County, New York."

"My name's Thyrsa. I was born out here on the old Oregon Trail."

It seemed in the nature of a ratification of friendship, and on it Range offered his hand, big and lean and muscular. Thyrsa laid her own small one in it, and they held each other in a motionless clasp. Range thought of all the women he had known, from the days of little Rose, and wondered if it were his own desolation or some call in this girl herself that reached his heart queerly.

"Now, Thyrsa"—he spoke with cheerful briskness—"it's hit the trail again."

"No!"

"Why, child, we'd freeze here tonight. A blizzard's on the tramp for us."

"I can't go on!" She said it without defiance, as a plain fact. "I shan't care if I freeze."

"No, it ain't called a mean death," he answered easily. "But how about the baby?"

Thyrsa's little face quivered again. "You take him."

"Me tote a kid! Thank you!" He fended off a score of swarming infants. "Rockett'll pack you both."

"Where to?"

"Well, I set out for Dode's Crossing. You tell where it lies from here?"

The girl, on her feet now, stood close to him, her slim smallness sharp against his powerful height. "This is the trail to it!"

"I reckon. How far?"

"I'm not sure. We—I—came from over the mountain—on the other trail. I guess we're near."

Range took her hand in both his. "Listen!" he commanded, with a kind of stern gentleness. "You're settin' out on a rough trail, strange to us both, with me, a man you never saw before. Two men have used you shamefully, but you've got to trust yourself entire to another. Can you have faith in me?"

The girl studied him, all his big, forceful personality, harsh voice, hard mouth, hawk glance.

"I'll stay with you." The cowboy phrase was quaint on her soft lips.

"It's a whack!" He twisted her hand in his grasp.

The cabin had sheltered them, after a fashion, from the snow; the open let them have it, wet and clinging. Rockett shuffled along faster now under a light weight. The girl sat deep down in the saddle, the baby held before her. Range strode ahead. Night and the snow blurred horse and rider completely. He spoke to her once in a while to make sure she was awake. At first, her answers came with tired promptness; by and by they halted and failed. Range pulled up, reached up into the saddle, and lifted her to the ground.

"You got to walk a spell." He steadied her by her shoulders. "Ain't bedtime yet."

"No." Obediently she began to stumble along beside him.

"Give me the kid. It's too heavy for you."

Drowsiness fell away from her. "Let be. He's all warm in my cloak," she begged. "Please let be." Distress sharp upon her, still her gentleness did not fail her.

Growling something, Range flung a big-boned arm around her under the bundle. He felt her stiffen rigidly away from him and in contempt for the ridiculous shyness that could remember itself in the very house of death, he threatened her harshly:

"You'll fall if you don't give me a chance to hang on to you. I got to help you 'long."

With a queer, trembling sigh, her taut little body relaxed into his rough hold, and, Rockett dragging behind them, they plowed on once more.

"Is this cursed uptrail ever goin' to make the peak?" he stormed. "I've



Glenn
Kove

With a queer, trembling sigh, her taut little body relaxed into his rough hold.

been crawlin' uphill all day an' all night."

Even on those words the downslope began, sliding Rockett on top of them, slattering wet stones at their heels, pushing them along a descent slippery as cold grease. By iron will Range kept his footing, warding off his horse with one hand, holding up the girl with the other. She plodded along beside him, head so close in the bend of his arm he could feel her body rise and fall with her laboring breath. In spite of the dead chill of the snow, Range sweated with his tremendous exertion.

"This ain't goin' to do it. I musn't play out," he told himself; then to the girl: "Now, sister, I guess you're warmed up enough to ride Rock a while. Mind you stay with him!"

He lifted her heavily into the saddle, thinking how yesterday he could have swung her up flying. He talked to her all the time now, of anything that entered his head—the trail, horses, mines—and called sternly for an answer. When she spoke clearly, he let

her ride on; when her voice reached him thin and far away, he forced her to walk.

Like a march in a nightmare where a man forever struggles to reach a goal, forever falls back from it, Range stumbled down the trail. Sometimes he laughed inwardly in bleak mirth at the irony that had dropped down upon the sagging shoulders of a beaten man these helpless creatures. To fight this night through alone was a task for all that was in a man; was he a giant to do more? Mostly, however, he lurched along like some machine out of its groove, holding up his horse, calling to the girl in monotonous habit.

Suddenly the bridle twitched in his hand, tightened, and held taut. Rockett coughed with a hollow groan and rolled over heavily. Range, his body leaping quick as his brain, snatched the girl from the saddle and flung her clear of the battering hoofs. He struck match after match to examine the horse, quiet at once save for his flanks heaving to long sobs.

"He ain't broke any bones," he told the girl, silent in the darkness beyond. "He slipped, an' was too played out to keep his feet. I can turn him loose to take his chances with the wolves, or I can give him his sleepin' medicine right now." His voice grew harsher at each word. "Old Rock's been a good friend to me. I gentled him myself."

"No, no," begged a soft voice out of the night. "Don't leave him. We can help him along."

"I hate bad to quit up on him. All right. We'll sink or swim together," as if he had wanted her permission.

The baby had waked at last; its cries pierced the air.

"I got another bottle o' milk for him," the voice went on. "We'll make a fire to heat it."

"He'll have to take his cold to-night," Range answered grimly.

"Oh, 'twill hurt him."

"Girl alive," burst out the man, "you got it in your head he's likely to be froze before mornin', an' you an' me, too?"

"We needn't to make him bear any more pain than he must, need we?" with a meekness soft as the snow and as penetrating.

Range struck another match without a word. He had broken his code of never explaining to a woman, and he was angry at her and at himself. The flare showed at the side of the trail a squat pine under whose low-hung branches the ground was still covered with dry needles. He groped for the girl, pulled her in close to the trunk, scooped up in his hands what he judged to be a pile of cones and needles, and applied his last match. The leap caught into a tiny glow.

"Quick, now!" he ordered.

Thyrza crouched low over it, the wailing baby clasped to her breast. Range crept in between her and the wind, crowded up to her till his shoul-

ders pressed hers, their slender width bolt upright before him.

"Lean back against me, Thyrza," he commanded, with his usual roughness. "Don't be 'fraid you'll sag down on me too heavy. I'm the backbone o' this enterprise, you remember."

She dropped down into the hollow of his shoulder and lay there, held quiet and steady while the baby drained the last drop of milk. Only the gurgles of the baby and the small hiss of the snowflakes stirred the deep waste of the night.

Range drew her hood down around her face, raised her to her feet, and said strongly: "I'm goin' to pack the kid, now, an' you ain't to counter me."

He stripped off his heavy coat, underneath which he wore a knitted jacket and a thick flannel shirt. The jacket he pulled over his head and wound around the baby snugly.

"Warm as your cloak," he triumphed over her.

She strained her eyes up to him in the last flare of the fire. "You'll be froze, Range." Emotion that only the troubles of others seemed able to stir in her quivered in her voice.

"Don't you worry. I got to work too hard for any freezin' proposition."

He stamped out the fire, drew Rockett's bridle through the crotch of his elbow, settled the bundle of babyhood into it, and clasped the girl with his free hand.

"Range"—the smallest sound in his ear—"if you hadn't run upon me, you'd be safe an' warm at Dode's now. You can't make it, though—"

"Yes, I can!" he cut her short imperiously.

"Not with us two. You leave baby an' me behind. I ain't afraid—truly, friend, I ain't—an' so one o' us will be saved. It's all foolishness, the three o' us dyin' out here on the mountain, an'—an'—it's the truth, I ain't afraid to die."

A great oath surged into Range's throat, but something choked it down. "We'll pull through together or we'll go out together!" he told her, with a dead quiet, and forged ahead into the storm.

Old man Jot Kench, half-crazed prospector in Crow Gulch, twelve miles out from Dode's Crossing, shook himself out of his bunk at daybreak the morning after the storm. He was cold, and he hurried to blaze up a fire in his stove. The world that showed through his one window was lead color in the sky, ghostly white beneath, and still as death. He drew on his boots and coat, growling a little to himself, to see how his one comrade, his cross little cow, Butter, and his chickens had made it through in the rotted old barn. He stepped out into the driftless snow; then brought himself up with a jerk.

"Would you say, now, he was real?" for old Kench had the hermit's habit of "seein' things." He pointed a long, accusing finger at a horse that rubbed against his barn door and pawed uncertainly in the snow before it. "Own-er's dead, most probably. No, he's there, an' another feller with him!" The old man set out through the snow on a pounding run.

There, at the edge of dawn and of shelter, Range had fallen, Thyrza and the baby clutched in his arms. The old man, strong still as a bear, dragged them into the cabin, rubbed them with snow, dosed them with whisky and scalding coffee, put Thyrza into his bunk, and Range into some furs by the stove.

"Give 'em time, they'll come round," he told himself comfortably. "She's white an' he's white, but, by golly, the kid looks for all the world like an Injin papoose."

Range grasped the scheme of things first, blinking at the old man frying deer steaks in a sputtering pan.

"Hello!" he said, his voice weak, but cool as ever. "I did wrestle through."

"Much as ever." His host smiled upon the powerful figure stretched out limp on the floor. "Your wife an' baby's on Mendin' Trail, too."

"Wife!" vaguely. "Baby!"

"Buck up, son. Ye ain't forgot ye're a fam'ly man, hev ye?" grinned the other.

Range dragged himself to his feet, every joint in his body like iron, and over to the corner of the room. The girl, her cloak and dress thrown over the bunk, lay starkly under old Jot's blankets, the baby's little dark poll cuddled in her neck. Her hair, softly brown, was all around her face; her dark lashes rested on her fever-bright cheeks; her lips touched each other in tender curves. Range, staring down at her, thought it the sweetest, most innocent face he had ever seen; his heart beat back a thousand years to Rose, his child sweetheart.

Thyrza's lids fluttered like the wings of a trapped bird, then opened to him, so that he looked straight down into her dark, mysterious eyes, where the secret of herself seemed to lurk bafflingly.

"Time to start, Dick?" she whispered.

The strange name angered Range, he could not for his life explain why.

"We're arrived," he told her curtly. "All you got to do is rest up."

Understanding dawned in her face; she spoke as if for the first time.

"Oh, Range"—her voice was stronger—"you alive from that awful night?"

"I 'pear to be," still dry. "How are you?"

"Baby's asleep, just like he never saw a snowstorm." That had been the meaning of his question to her.

"You can't kill an Injin papoose. In twenty years he'll be growed up to get your scalp."

Thyrza hugged the wee creature to

her breast. "Just as likely," soothingly, without attention to Range's real meaning.

The old man now came over to the bunk. "Feel any fellowship toward breakfast?" He held a plate of venison in one hand, a cup of coffee in the other. "I got milk for the baby, too," he told her proudly.

"I guess I don't need to eat just now." She smoothed the refusal with an adorable smile.

"Yes, you do, too," Range told her roughly. "I'll fix you." He sat down at the head of the bunk behind her, and raised her, pillow and all, to a sitting position. "Now, you eat, or I'll feed you."

With the childlike meekness with which she took all his orders, she ate and drank, each mouthful an effort, yet every bit consumed.

Range laid her back on the pillow. "Good girl!"

She caught his hand against the side of the bunk in a harsh kind of caress, the only touch, he remembered, she had given him of her free will. "You are good!"

"Come 'long, son, get your rations," put in old Jot.

Three days the queer household held together, while the sullen skies cleared, the snow melted, and an Indian summer, golden sweet, again smiled in the valley. The old miner, lost in his dim past, roamed about the hills on secret occasions long hours together, careless of the travelers flung so strangely in upon him. Range split the winter supply of wood and mended a leak in the roof; Thyrsa baked bread, swept the cabin, and patched the old man's tattered clothes. Together they amused the baby, already stolid as the chief of a tribe, or played games with a dog-eared pack of cards. Range accepted this rest as the calm between the troubled past and the pale future, a

little valley where small, bright herbs grew, birds sang, and a clear brook ran, set in a circle of bleak crags. He gave himself up to deep peace, merry and light-hearted and kind, whittling toys for the baby, teaching the girl tricks with the cards, telling stories, the boy he once had been.

Thyrsa, creeping out of her shyness, answered sweetly his moods, as a kitten might frisk about a fierce watchdog, gay, yet wary. Range found all sorts of adorable little ways in her—crinkles of humor, sobrieties of wisdom, tender mother cares, freakish child whims. She was like some little creature of the woods, not quite afraid, not quite friendly. He had never seen such purity of heart; the whiteness of the spirit that shone out on him, radiant, moved him in the deep, still places. Yet every now and then he came upon a sad knowledge of the fashions of this world, as if an angel should live among men and learn them. Neither one spoke of days past or to be, living only in the great now. Once only a dark pool was stirred between them, its black waters lapsing to their feet.

It was the second night—twilight drawing in fast, the stove glowing a deep red; Range seated on an upturned keg; Thyrsa in the one chair, hewed out by the miner himself, her eyes shut, her face sleepily sweet. Suddenly old Jot flung open the door, whisking in on them all the chill freshness of the night, and began to rummage in his kit of tools, talking in a great burst of voice upon a whole day's dumbness, after his singular habit.

"I met up with a man down the gulch, back along." They had found out this might mean months or years ago. "He tol' me Dep'ty Sheriff Crea's got shot up bad. He's like to cash in."

"He has," Range told him.

"Dead, eh? Who's the feller done it?"

"Jim Neal."



"I got milk for the baby, too," he told her proudly.

"How you know?"
Range shrugged. "It ain't a secret. Neal's pal split, an' Neal came in."

"One o' a gang, eh?" the old man asked. "Horse stealin', robbin' the stage, an' like o' that?"

"That's it."

"You say this Neal come in? How you 'count for that?"

"Oh, I guess he was tired o' runnin' an' hidin' like a fox."

"Seems like I knowed a tale 'bout that Neal," mused the old man. "What fashion o' chap might he be?"

Range shifted his seat till he was deep in shadow. "A hell raker, like the rest o' 'em."

"I got it! He's the chap went down to the spring when Holt's Ferry was besieged by the Injins an' folks for miles round was shut up in Holt's cabin an' there warn't a drop o' water 'mong 'em."

"That's him."

"Why, son, Jimmy Neal saved the lives o' a dozen women an' children, let alone men! Maintained he was the only foot-loose man there, an' plunged out 'mong the red devils an' brought back two buckets o' water. Shot in the hip just as he made the door. Ed Orr, that tol' me, helped drag him in. How come Jim Neal to herd in with a gang o' thieves? Why, folks called him the squarest young feller in the territory."

Range's answer came slowly, a word at a time: "He wasn't one o' 'em. He never ran off a man's horse in his life."

"What he doin' to shoot up the dep'ty, then?"

It was almost as if Range were musing to himself, finding answers for his own seeking.

"They were his friends—some he'd knowed since he was old 'nough to aim a gun—an' they'd stood by him in hard places. He just happened to be with 'em when Sheriff John plunged in among 'em, an' he just pulled his gun—like that—instinctive, you might say. An' he's too good a shot to miss."

"An' the gang rounded on him?"

"Only one. All the others were stanch."

"He did right." The girl spoke sud-

denly out of the shadows. "His friends were attacked, an' he stood by 'em. That's what a friend's for. He didn't know who 'twas attacked 'em."

"Yes, he did, too," savagely. "He aimed straight for Crea."

"He didn't stop to think. He hadn't time."

"He'd had time 'nough before that." Ruthlessly Range stripped the accused man of all the pitiful 'tittle shelters she raised.

"They'll never hang Jimmy Neal," the old man broke in. "Why, there was another time. Jim swam his horse right into Blood River, in freshet time, to pull out a boy he never set eyes on before; drowned his horse an' broke his arm. An' he saved Ol' Man Supplee when his dance hall caught fire an' he was jammed under a beam. An' he took care o' that soldier feller that had the smallpox. Man alive," waving his arms over his head in furious repudiation, "they *can't* hang a feller like that!"

"He ain't goin' to be hanged," Range told him somberly. "He's had his trial. He's to quit the country forever."

"Goin' back on Jim Neal like that! An' for shootin' a pore tool like Crea. Why, he ain't worth Neal's little finger! Mean to the bone an'—"

"He's dead," Range reminded him grimly.

"This territory's growin' too all-fired vartuous," sneered the old man. "Shut up Mertice's hotel to Put-in-Bar an' drove him an' his pal flyin' over the mountains."

"That's so?" Range leaned forward eagerly. "Who did?"

"High-charactered citizens," grinned the other, who for all his isolation in his lonely cabin seemed abreast with the latest news. "Put-in's got a full house o' Eastern folks, an' they can't live 'long o' no sich miscreants."

"Mertice's a cur," muttered Range.

"He'd step on his own mother's face to climb up out o' danger."

"Certain he is," agreed the other cheerfully, "an' so's his pard, Dick Bland. He's low as you can get an' not crawl on four legs. They cleared out 'tween two days, leg over leg, sheriff hotfoot after 'em. I never heard his place was so all-fired awful, an' 'twas rough on his girls to chase 'em into the open."

"I reckon they can keep their heads above water. They're Mertice's own brood." Range laughed cruelly.

"They're not!" The passion of conviction in Thyrsa's voice startled the men. "They wait on table an' play cards with the men, an' maybe sing an' dance for 'em, if they can, but I—I—know some o' 'em, an' they're *good*." She swept on: "They're poor an' they ain't educated much, an' they ain't got folks to look out for 'em, but I tell you they fight all the time to be *good*!"

Range's laugh was hateful. "At Mertice's?"

A queer little sound reached him. Instantly he heaved his big length out of his seat around to her and laid a warm, kind hand comfortingly on her shoulder. What kin had this child at Mertice's that she was so flicked on the raw?

"Now, now"—his harsh voice softened—"we don't think same way 'bout some things. I've been round a heap more'n you an' had experience, but we ain't goin' to quarrel, are we?"

The girl gave him her strange look commingled of heavenly purity and sad wisdom. "I can't be against that Neal nor those poor girls, nor any hunted, fleeing folks, an' you needn't to ask me."

Range's other hand wavered above her hair, bright gold in the fire shine, as if in benediction. "Bless your innocent little heart! Stand by 'em—they need it, poor devils!—but don't turn again' me because I can't, too."

Thyrsa's small, fair face colored into flame. "I'd be a poor, mean creature to turn against you!" Her voice vibrated movingly. "You, who saved my life an' have been—kind like you thought I was—" Suddenly she dropped her face in her hands.

Range's arms came down around her in a rush of fiery desire. He would hold this sweet, soft little soul safe and sheltered forever! His hands dropped heavily to his side; he strode across the room to the darkened window. Safe in *his* arms! A week ago he would have caught her up without one thought, or even now, if she had been less angelically good! But he wasn't quite down to *that* yet.

Kench gave over tumbling his tools about as suddenly as he had started the hunt.

"Say," he remarked, "Thyrsa's a queersome sort o' name for these parts. There's consid'ble few Dolores an' Mercedes an' Kittys an' Minnys, an' like that. My grandmarm bore that name, but she died more'n sixty year ago, back in the State o' Maine."

The girl answered, with passion: "My folks call me Dolly, but I *hate* it!"

"Shan't be called it here, then," the old man soothed her. "You lazy hulk o' a Range, stir round for some supper."

That night Range and Thyrsa again played cards together and laughed and tricked each other, gay as children.

The next morning Range stepped out into a world burning in sunlight mild as May. Already Thyrsa was abroad; he watched her at a distance feeding old Jot's chickens, the little winds snatching at her skirts and fluttering her hair prettily around her face, while her quick little feet stepped in and out among the clucking chickens.

"Ain't she a pretty, pretty girl?" he

murmured, in a wonder at all her small daintiness.

Who was she? Where was she bound? Why had she been abandoned in so savage a loneliness? After three close-knit days he was no wiser than on that first night. Out of nowhere into nowhere? He would never question her. He pondered her deeply as she stood in a pool of sunshine, all gold and pink and white. Again desire was molten hot within him. Why not? He had always made a good living for one; he could surely stretch it to cover two. If this land cast him out, other countries would be glad of his force and courage.

A cloud, dazzling bright, sailed high up across the turquoise sky. To it Thyrza lifted her eyes, as if expectant. It seemed to the watcher that "God's glory smote her in the face."

"It's too late," he groaned, "too late!"

Then because his heart ached drearily, he said in his gruffest voice:

"Well, Thyrza, I reckon this is my day to lope on to Dode's. How 'bout you?"

"Oh, I'm all right." She gave him all her brightness. "I'm goin' to the Santa Maria Mission. The sisters will bring up baby. I know some of them. Then I'll travel on East."

"East!" The word meant months of fearful journeying, by land or sea. "Alone?"

"Oh, folks go," with the sweet vagueness questions about herself always brought out.

"Kin there?"

"My stepfather."

Suddenly Range remembered he had no clew to her save her little, old-fashioned name, yet he could not ask more.

"How you reach the mission?"

"He'll take me." She gestured toward the cabin. "He's goin' to fetch

horses from Dode's. We'll start tomorrow."

"You can't make the mission in one day."

"We'll stay at Holt's Ferry. He knows ol' Mr. Holt."

All planned without a word to him! Why couldn't he say: "I'll take you!" Ah, the ferry, the mission, all, all forbidden land, now! One aid was in his power.

"I want you should ride Rock. He's a better horse than any Kench'll find for you."

"Oh, I couldn't take the horse that you gentled yourself an' that you think a whole heap of, your own horse!"

Range was close to her now, his voice so quiet she might have guessed its significance. "That's it," he said deeply. He meant: "He's mine an' so are you. I want my two dearest possessions to be together." But all he could say was again the foolish words: "That's it."

Some fringe of his meaning brushed her; her eyes filled with tears. "I'll keep him safe for you. It'll be some like havin' you yourself."

Now it was his hawk eyes that filmed. "I shan't have anythin' of you!"

The girl reached into the neck of her dress and drew up a thin gold chain holding a locket.

"Look!"

He bent over her. One side of the locket opened on a tintype of a young woman—it might have been her elder sister; the other, on a dimpled-cheeked, smooth-browed child, any one's little daughter, save for the large, grave eyes.

"You dear!" It came from him like a caress.

"I was eight years old. Mother an' me were taken in Frisco. Mother married in just a month, an' she never looked like that again. She was sick—an'—worried. We traveled round to different camps—" She left it there abruptly. "I never had another picture took. I'd like for you to have it."

She found the spring that released the slide and reached the little picture to him on her palm. Range's big fingers fumbled it.

"I'll keep it always," he muttered.

"You're so good to me."

"You listen to me, an' quit talkin' like that!" He was savage in his pain. "A half-breed greaser wouldn't 'a' left you to die that night!"

Her face was very near his, raised, so that he marked the delicate lines of her chin and mouth. "Two men did leave me," she said, quite without bitterness; then quickly: "It's not that. You're so kind right like now. You see, I've just known other men in business, an' that's different."

Her eyes held his, and, as he looked, he saw rise out of their mysterious depths the woman spirit, brave, uncompromising, enduring; no more to him a plaything, but a sword forged in life's fires and steeled to life's battles. In a breath it was gone; once more the troubled girl stood near him.

Range caught her hand between both his crushingly. She drew it away with a gentle motion.

"Why, that's an ugly gash you got there!" He pointed to a lean scar on the under part of her arm beneath the elbow. "Looks like you'd been knifed." He said it to quiet the tumult leaping within him.

She stared at it strangely. "It's my sign," she said, more strangely still.

"Sign o' what?"

She laughed unsteadily. "You'll know me by it when we meet next time." Then very sweetly and sadly: "Dear friend, I go one way, you another. But we'll not forget each other—will we—ever?"

Before he could answer, she was gone, a flutter of quick feet.

That was their good-by. Range at once started off to Dode's Crossing for horses, and was not back till dark. The next morning, she rode up the trail on

Rockett, the Indian baby, mute as an idol, in her arms, old Kench ambling ahead. And Range, on his borrowed horse, rode down. Where the trail bent sharply in, he reined up to see the last of her. She, too, turned, swinging round in the saddle, lithe as a boy. He spurred up to her, the stones clattering under his horse's feet.

"Thyrza, write me a letter when you're safe, to that friend I told you about at Dode's Crossin'. I'll get it some day."

She smiled woefully. "By that day you'll have forgotten." Then with the quick tenderness for all possible hurts that was always hers: "I will, indeed I will. An' I'll tell all about the baby, too."

Range swayed in his saddle. A sudden weakness like the body's exhaustion untwined the sinews of his will, his lips quivered on the cry: "Stay with me! I'm poor, friendless, hunted! I need you to help me hold to my manhood!" He bit down on the shame of it, and, hands clenched over his pomel, eyes hot with a wasting inner fire, watched until the buckskin horse and dark cloak blurred into the autumn haze.

The raw, half-built coast town was caught in the path of a January thaw; the rain rushed down in torrents; the broken, ill-lit streets ran like a mill race; the eaves of the houses hurled water in bucketfuls onto the footpaths. No one was abroad. From windows set at long intervals thick, yellow leaves of light wavered through the blackness. Now and then a flourish of fiddles and a gust of song beat up above the roar of the storm.

Range, lurching forward in his saddle, drew in opposite a mean building from which sounds of feet and voices reached him and lights gleamed through at the chinks.

"Looks like a hard ol' hang-out," he



He watched her at a distance feeding old Jot's chickens. "Ain't she a pretty, pretty girl?" he murmured.

muttered. "I reckon that's my number now'days." He flung himself out of his saddle and stood trembling in a narrow streak of light.

The air was abnormally warm for winter, yet he shivered with a cold that sucked his bones. His head felt as if an iron band were bound around it, which every instant invisible hands screwed up to crushing tightness. His mouth and throat were chokingly dry, as it were filled with lime dust; his hands shook; his teeth clattered against each other.

"Lord, I'm sick!" he muttered to

himself, starting at a dragging gait across the street.

The very day Range had parted from Thyrza, he had been hurt in an accident and carried, half dead, by his friend, Clem, into his cabin at Dode's Crossing. It had been no splendid adventure that had ended thus; only an insignificant contention with a mean horse that had thrown itself backward on him in a corner too narrow for the rider to leap aside. The frontier doctor, roughly skilled, had patched his gashes, mended his breaks, and told him he might travel again in perhaps a month. The sick man, raging to be gone, at the end of a scant three weeks had ridden off, sure of his restored powers; only to trail back piteously at the

end of the day, the deep wound in his side torn open, another month of lying up before him.

This time the doctor himself, convinced against his own eyes by the patient's strong statements, had given the word too soon. After one night in a deserted cabin, Range had waked to pain and fever, which three days of sluicing rain had heightened with every mile he journeyed.

The door flung open, a man kicked something into the rain that sprang into the light a lean dog, howling and crouching under the broken step.

"Must be a mighty low-down man to turn a dog out this night," Range told himself. "This ain't the place to lie up." Then, straightening with an effort: "I won't lie up, either. I got to get somewhere soon to make a new start."

He gathered all his forces, thumped loudly on the floor, and marched in, shoulders squared, head up, cheeks fevered, and eyes challengingly brilliant. The room was just the usual low saloon of the time and place, dirty, poorly lit, in which men drank, played cards, and listened to a rasping fiddle and a squeaking guitar. There were seven men beside the bartender; four playing at a table in one corner, two, the musicians, one leaning idly against the bar. The room was foul with tobacco smoke and flaringly hot.

Range nodded to the men, who nodded back dumbly, and sank into a chair by a table. The heat of the room gripped his throat like a hand, strangling him. Carefully pronouncing each word, he called for his drink, laying the money on the table before him. He swept the room with a slow glance, noting each cunning or brutish face.

"You're a pretty gang!" he summed them up. "That's the half-breed that murdered Joe Sollers, or I'm blind. An' that fellow next him—a reg'lar jailbird—where have I met him?"

He raised his glass in a hand so weak he spilled half its contents.

"He's next to useless," he heard the bartender remark to the man near him.

Range knew what he meant, although it was his first drink that day. His sickness was coming on him in strides; his broken leg racked him with twists of pain; his hurt side throbbed agonizingly; nausea wrenched him; his head rolled back over his shoulder, then jolted forward. He slept in snatches of dreams.

The music stopped. That pricked his dullness. He watched the musicians

pack up their instruments and disappear into the darkness; then two of the players, also. The dog howled for entrance into the light and warmth. A door behind the bar opened and a woman stood in it, saying something about the dog. At her voice, Range turned his clouded eyes toward her. She looked old and sick and immeasurably forlorn, a frontier woman, broken by toil and privation. He watched her in a dim trance that did not change even when the dog rubbed its wet body against him. After the door had closed, he still gazed at the spot.

That momentary stimulus quieted, he drooped forward again, his arms slack on the table in front of him. He seemed to float away on thin waves of helplessness, where no will, nor fiber, nor nerve was left in him; yet he could in a strange fashion both hear and see distorted shapes, grotesque sounds.

"They drugged me?" he wondered, without personal interest in the matter. "Or this all my infernal hurts?"

It seemed to him some one pulled his chair by inches from under him, so that he slid quietly to the floor. Perhaps it was only his own inert weight that toppled him over. Again this slight change in his surroundings rubbed his wits; he was conscious that people whispered close behind him; then a hand fumbled at his belt.

His pistol? His money? With a bound, he was on his feet, hurling the thief to the floor, his splendid strength leaping through all his veins, his hand, quick as lightning, plucking forth his pistol. Before he could snap the trigger, the deadly weakness swept him, as a sea sweeps the deck of a boat; his slack hand lowered, discharging the pistol futilely into the air; he stumbled heavily to his knees, then fell forward, his head lying sideways on his limp arm. Yet, in the melting of all his body's powers, a few strands of his brain held taut.

"They've got me!" he judged the case even as he groped for the pistol that had jolted from his fist.

The door just behind his head swung open from the inner room. Some one sprang in front of him, blotting out the figures that loomed in a red haze before him.

"It's that woman!" His surprise was feeble.

"Don't you dare to touch him! Don't you dare!" The words came from an incredible distance, small as the voice of an insect, yet clear in every word. "If you murder him, you got to murder me, too."

"I could take oath that's Thyrza!" In the strangeness of this idea, he forgot to clear his befogged brain.

"Quit your carryin' on, Dole," another voice miles away, harsh, yet wheedling. "He drew his gun on us. We just want to take it off'n him, so he can't hurt himself nor nobody else."

Range struggled like a giant to rise, got up on one knee, and again fell, smitten by the rush of fever. He had found his pistol, however, and with leaping brain, shuddering body, and eyes that swam in blackness, aimed it. Cold, small fingers twisted it away from him.

"I can shoot straight enough——" He lost the rest. "I don't care any more 'bout livin'." He was sinking down through bottomless night. "I ain't afeared o' you—— Good as murdered me out—— A woman alone on the trail—— Keep back—— Yes——crazy—— He shan't be killed here in——" The rest was thick mutters of sound and glaring red-and-purple lights that bored into his tortured brain. Then he rose up, up out of the void, to hear sharply:

"I claim his life for mine!"

He dropped back, followed by words that seemed hurled down upon him, in the voices of men ferocious, raging:

"Got to look out for him yourself——

you an' Sarah. Dies——your blame—— Carry him yourself!"

He felt himself lifted in weak arms that could not hold him steady, and carried staggeringly outdoors—the dash of rain in his face told him that—and into some dark place where he was laid down on a bed heavenly soft and warm. Some one drew off his wet clothes. At that, blood ran from the hurt in his side, his senses lost hold on reality, and he sank into a stupor of fever and weariness.

In the queer time that followed—not black night, not clear day, just a gray penumbra in which minutes might be hours, or weeks days—Range lay in a raging fever, that had, nevertheless, like the inrush and back drift of the sea, moments of quick sensitiveness, of blind stupor.

Whenever the fever gripped him in its flaming hands, he was possessed of a vision. A creature light and soft as air, with lambent eyes and compassionate smile, held a cup of cooling drink to his lips, bathed his hot face, ministered to his needs with a tenderness that wrapped him round like a garment. He would cling to this creature's gentle hands, begging with tears of helplessness that she stay with him; and she in a voice of exquisite softness would soothe him, as if he had been a baby, holding his burning head against her breast. Then he would sink down into the drugged insensibility that made his sleep.

Each time he roused from this, weak as drifting water, but, for the time, clear-eyed, an old woman, scarred with suffering of body and soul, would be at his side, caring for him with a weary capability.

In his fever he called this vision "Thyrza," breathing the name over and over in his whispering voice; in his season of calm he heard the old woman tell him her name was Sarah.

At last perfect strength of body, in spite of weeks of draining fever, battled through, and Range, lean as a hound, white as a bone, yet steady-minded, lay staring around him.

The room was a cabin, log-built, clay-chinked, dimly lighted, the kind he had known for twenty years, scantily furnished, his bed a bunk, his covering a patchwork quilt, the chairs and tables hewn out by inexperienced hands. Yet this poor room offered in all its aspects that something of peace and cheer we call homelike. Range's thoughts, if floating, broken fancies could be called that, wandered away to the old house on the Hudson. There was nothing in that prosperous farmstead like this, yet the one called back the other.

Next he looked at himself—his long legs like sticks, rigid under the quilt, his hands the talons of a great bird. If he could not see his face, he could guess its sunken lines.

"Well," he said aloud—strongly, but only a husky whisper mouthed it out—"I guess I'll find out things."

He tried to call—a general shout, for he had no name in his memory—but his voice would not carry beyond his own bunk. He waited, and saw the past pace by him, quiet, detached, in the fashion of the life he had lived. Daylight darkened around him while he moved from the pretty boy, a-tiptoe for life, welcomed into his first camp, to the hard-faced man hunted from his last one. He was weary, and slept.

When he awoke, a lamp burned on the table. Who had lighted it? He took up the tale of his days again. How they raced by! He was alone on the storm-beaten trail, at the deserted hut looking in on the Madonna and Child, in the storm, with them in his arms. Was that night real? Had he won through that battle in the dark—the gigantic cold, the monstrous weariness, pitted against the tiny, indomitable will to live? How the girl had weighed

down his arms, shortening his stride, tripping his footsteps! Yet without her he would have gone under; her inert body, her pallid face had been the impulse that had driven his broken powers. Thyrza! Queer, sweet little name! Was she, too, real, or a beautiful and tender dream, a lovely will-o'-the-wisp? He fumbled at his neck. There it was—the leather string, the small, wooden box, a bag made of a piece of his shirt, and the child's tintype.

Then came that hopeless spath, lying in Clem's cabin, in pain and loneliness and regret, the short journey in the rain, the fever surging high in his blood, the squalid saloon, the attack, his helplessness, the rescue. How? By whom? Had Thyrza truly been there, shielding his prone weakness with her own life? Or had that been the old woman magiced into youth by his sick eyes? It would be next to a marvel, the girl's presence in that den. But could any wonder outmarvel her calm position on the desolate trail? He shook his bewildered head groaningly.

Out of the shadows a woman came to him, old and sad.

"You feel you could eat a bite, son?" Her roughened hands smoothed down the covers tenderly.

"Can you tell me my name, please?" he asked, with weak politeness.

"I heard you called 'Range.'"

"I guess you did! Who called me that?" Each word was a reward of will over an exhaustion that brought moisture to his forehead.

The old woman smiled a broken-hearted smile.

"Yourself, consid'ble few times."

He tried again. "What your name?"

"Sarah."

"That's it. An' theirs?"

"Who?"

"The half-breed, an' the other fellows that wanted to knife me?"

"They're all gone, every last one o'

'em! You an' me's all there's lef' in the hull place."

"You saved my life, Sarah."

"You might call it savin'," she answered enigmatically. "I'll get you somethin' to eat."

Another night and day and a second night, and Range found himself able to sit up against pillows and talk without gasping. He was going to find out now.

"Sarah, you answer my questions!" he commanded, with some of the old threat in his voice. "How long I been here?"

The old woman, knitting on a stocking that seemed always close to completion, but never attained unto it, ran a needle into her thin hair.

"Fortnight."

"Who owns this place?"

"Nobody now."

"Who did?"

"George an' Dick."

"Where are they?"

"Cleared out the mornin' after you come."

What did he care about this place, anyhow? He took a personal turn.

"Where's my belt?"

"Under your pillow. I took some o' the money to buy things for you."

"Oh, yes." He pushed that aside. "Why didn't they kill me? Tell me that!"

"Takes consid'ble to kill some folks."

He attacked her openly. "Did you throw yourself in front o' me an' aim my gun?"

The old woman sighed bitterly. "I never see nothin' but trouble come o' them guns."

In his baffled weakness he could have wept; he essayed cajolery:

"Ah, now, Sarah, what you want to treat me so mean for? Haven't you tended me like I was your son an' ain't you bound to be good to me all the time?"

"My son would 'a' growed to be a

man like you, I reckon. The Injuns got him—back—— I've lost count o' the years. George, he's only my half brother. My son was named Oliver. He favored his father. He was a handsome little fellow," her voice crooning away to nothingness.

"Where's Thyrza?" Range whispered in key with her mood.

"Gone with George. He drags her round on a chain."

"Did he hurt her when she fought for me?" with infinite caution, keeping his voice at monotonous ease. Plainly the old woman was a little "out," and would tell what he wished only under adroit handling.

"He's ugly, George is, times like that. He'd 'a' done her a mischief. Yes, he wanted to. I could see that."

Range moistened his dry lips. "But he didn't?" he drawled.

"She was despr'ate. She'd 'a' kilt him or herself or anybody with your gun, quick as *that*. Then George kinder viewed it he owed her some—thin' for that night he used her so. George ain't all bad. He's just a coward through an' through, that's all." She damned him thus horribly in an unmoved voice.

Range was helpless in this tangle. One straight clew led him in the maze. Thyrza had been there, had rescued him at the risk of her life.

"What made her go away before I was well?"

"Eh? Why, George come back for her." Faint surprise stirred her flat weariness.

"Why didn't she tell me she was goin'?"

Old Sarah stared vaguely. "She didn't want you should know 'twas her even. She's a queer girl."

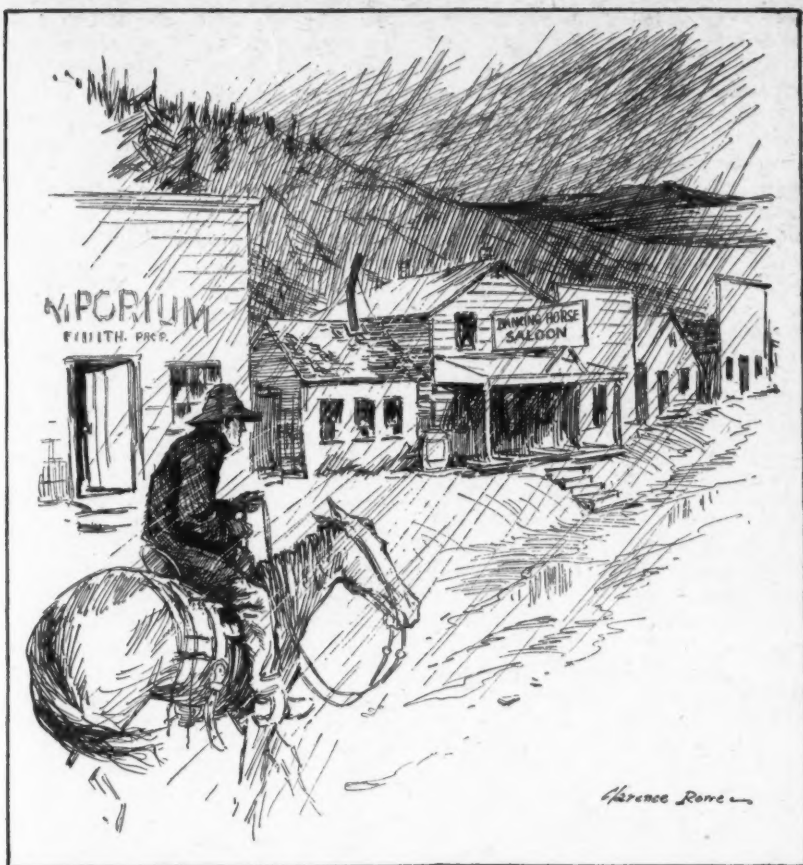
His voice shook with anxiety.

"Where's she gone to?"

"With George!"

"Where's *he* gone?"

"Nobody don't know that," impas-



"Looks like a hard ol' hang-out," he muttered.

sively. "Don't you get all het up. It'll give ye a back-set." She rolled up her knitting and limped away.

Long Range pondered this strangest adventure of his wandering life. "Sometimes I believe I'm locoed," he murmured, in the dark, "same as ol' granny, here. What's that little, sweet flower doin' growin' in this slime. You tell me that?" Then, as no answer came, he turned the question over: "Who is this George, anyhow, an' what

gives him the right to go draggin' her around wherever he pleases?"

At last he slept, muttering in a great bitterness: "It's all nothin' to me. My business is to clear out o' the country an' leave a good woman like she is alone."

Perhaps Sarah was a better leech than the Dode's Crossing doctor, perhaps the fever had burned all taint out of his blood; for Range grew fast into

his old magnificent strength and gallant courage.

"I'm young an' the world's wide," was his slogan now.

In the dim daylight and black night of the cabin, as he lay staring straight before him with the iron patience of a prisoner in his cell, a purpose, like a shaft of white light, illumined his inner path. He must find Thyrza and house her in a safe place somewhere.

"It's no 'count now that I'm run out o' camp like a coyote. I can shield her till she's among human bein's again, an' clear o' this George an' his gang."

Sarah gave him his clothes, washed and mended, packed him good food, and bade him good-by as if he had been her son, dead those many years; but the trail to his vanished lady she could not tell him. He must set out on a blind lead to No Man's Land.

So on a morning of winter, cold, keen as a sword blade, into a world of white frost and blue sky, he rode off from the town. His way was straight before him up the trail, back to Dode's; from there on up to old Kench's cabin; if need be, to the sisters at the mission. Every mile of that road was as peril-fraught as if Indians had lurked in the passes; he was an outlaw, driven out from his fellows. He rode like a scout in an enemy's country, taut-nerved, stealthy, his life in the hollow of his hand.

Yet he rode unswervingly. A fear stronger than that for himself was shaking his heart. Somewhere Thyrza was in need—in despair, it might be—and he alone could succor her. This, too, not in gratitude, because he wore his life now as a gift of her courage; it was that always he saw her seated on the ground in a dim glow of light, the baby on her knees, her small, pale face, in its dark hood, looking out into the night, hopeless, unflinching. Her mute lips, her sorrowful eyes cried to him, out of all the world, to save her. She

had been cast upon the trail for him in the hour when the dregs of his cup of life had been bitter as death upon his lips. Her extremity had been his opportunity to prove himself still a man. God—of whom he had not thought in years—had granted him a woman gentle as summer wind, pure as winter snow, steadfast as the stars, that all the parched roots of honor, deep planted in him, might be watered into bloom again.

Range could not sleep in the open such bleak nights, yet at every cabin door upon which he knocked he ran the risk that some one might greet him by name. He had been so long an outstanding figure in the territory; he had fallen with so startling a crash! But no one recognized him. In time he came to old Kench's. The old miner greeted him as if he had left the day before, urged him to stay, could tell him only that he had left Thyrza with the sisters "back along."

On to the mission he rode. And now, indeed, the land craved wary walking, his very own country. Twice he recognized a lonely passer on the trail as a former comrade; could he have been known, as well? The short, sharp days drawing into fierce nights kept men close at home; therein lay his safety. For lodging he chose the most remote cabins.

With a long, sighing breath, like a hunted animal that darts at last into its lair, he finally alighted at the mission. The good sisters were curious as birds, but far more credulous. They never connected the tall stranger, pallid and gaunt from illness, with any ugly story that weeks ago might have floated over their walls. Range told them, with a frankness that eased his heart, that he was no brother, nor old friend of Thyrza's, but her lover, if he might find her and woo her. The sisters bemoaned their ignorance of their guest's way. A man had come, a messenger

from Thyrsa's stepfather; she had gone with him. They had not liked his appearance or his ways, nor had Thyrsa herself. She had clung to them, had told them: "I must go to my stepfather. I promised my mother to stay with him," then had ridden away, with a weary face and eyes deep with tears. That had been weeks ago.

Range set his jaws doggedly. With patience he squeezed dry all the stories of Thyrsa's stay at the mission. They yielded two drops of information; her mother's maiden name had been Thyrsa Gray, and Nathan Gray, her mother's brother, had once owned a big ranch beyond Chimney Mountain. Toward Chimney Mountain he made ready to go.

One question he must ask, though the words cut him. He stood at the door of the mission, the Indian servant holding his horse in the courtyard.

"Mother," to the small, black figure beside him, "did Thyrsa ever speak about a man that found her in the snow?"

"She told us an old man in Crow Gulch brought her into his cabin."

He twisted his hat in his hands. "She never said—my name?"

"No, nor any man's." Suddenly from their low-bending look the sister's eyes leaped up at him like a sword thrust. "My son, Thyrsa is a good girl. I who tell you *know*."

He rode away with the same curious bewilderment fogging his brain that Thyrsa herself caused in him.

A great moon, hard and cruel, blazed in cold fire across the frozen river. On either bank the land was iron-gray with frost or blue-black with pine shadows. No trail showed through in it, nor mark of human habitation. It was a mournful world, forgotten by man, haunted by prowling shapes of fox and wolf, breathed upon ever and again by a long, wailing gust of wind. Range, on the

near side of the bank, dropped the reins of his horse from his numb fingers, slid off its back, and sat down on a boulder thrust up out of the ice. He was too cold to ride, too weary to walk, too disheartened to go on. For days he had been seeking Nathan Gray's ranch, always just twenty miles farther. Tonight he was clear off the trail in this No Man's Land. He beat his hands against his sides; it was like striking wooden blocks on boards.

"What's the use of goin' on?" he asked his horse gravely. "This ain't the road to anywhere."

The horse sidled up close, blowing his nostrils in and out with a crackling sound in the still cold.

"What's he scent?" Range listened with sharp-set nerves. Hark! Was that far, far-away sound the hunting cry of timber wolves? His dulled senses slid away from the effort; he flung his arm around his horse's neck and let it muzzle its head down into his breast. It was warm and living in this frozen, dead world.

"This is goin' to work the right way to freeze to death," he whispered into the soft ears. "Just drop off into a nice, warm sleep, an' forget to wake up."

His face sunk forward into the mane. "Peterin' out mighty small, eh, boy?" His voice was sodden with sleep. "But we did fight, these two days back, like little men, didn't we?"

The horse whickered softly; then, as its rider made no sound, sent out a high call of distress.

"Bet he does hear wolves. Wait, ol' chap, till I get five minutes' nap. Then we'll up an' at 'em. I wish I was sure my little girl was in a safe place tonight."

His words faltered and dropped out; his whole weight sank over onto the horse; his brain lost grip on the world around him.

Then suddenly he heard a cry, frail,



"Don't you dare to touch him! Don't you dare! If you murder him, you got to murder me, too."

piteous, far off, drowned out by a mixed, babbling sound that ended in the keening howl every woodsman knows. His eyes were heavy, his sight thick, yet he strained to make out on the crest of the divide across the river a slender shape that silhouetted itself against the fire-flooded sky, then fled on winged feet down toward him. In a flash the ridge was black with running figures that gave tongue while their low-hung bodies ate up the distance. The figure was a woman—a girl—yes, by the long, hooded cloak and flying hair he knew it for Thyrza!

Every muscle in his body fought, snapping, to break the trance of sleep;

his blood hammered at his heart till the walls seemed like to burst. With a shout that wrenched his lungs he sprang to his feet, snatched his gun from the saddle, and aimed.

The night was as still as a hushed room, the river and bank lay empty before him. His horse stood with bent knees and hanging head. Range himself shook like a broken man; sweat beaded his forehead.

"God," he quivered forth—but the name was not an oath—"I was dream-in'!"

He tightened his saddle with twitching fingers. "Maybe she is hunted by wolves—somewhere, somehow—an' I

sleep here like a hound by the fire. She's saved my life again!"

Stiffly, pain stabbing each numbed nerve, he crawled into the saddle, spurred up his horse, and began again the unequal march against death. He forced his horse along the ice of the river, up the bank, on to the ridge. It was desperate work for man and beast; the former swung in the saddle, faint with cold and weariness, but grinding his knees into his horse's side, his heels into the stirrups. He would not die while Thyrza lived and needed him. He set his teeth over her name and held up on the bridle. Sometimes she glided ahead of him, a hooded wraith; sometimes she lay, warmly human, in his arms. Always, as on that night when she had been with him in actuality, her spirit forced him on. So, groaning, stumbling, swaying, they crossed the ridge, and saw in the hollow, a scant mile away, the twinkling lights of a ranch.

The big, mild ranch owner shook the ashes from his pipe onto the hearth, brought the legs of his chair down to the floor, and faced Range squarely. He had a patriarchal type of face and kind eyes.

"You tolerable warm an' fed up?" His rumbling voice rolled on every R. Range, in a big chair the other side of the fire, nodded, smiling.

"I'm comfortable as they make it, thank you, sir!"

His host's serious look dwelt on him ponderingly; in its calm depth was a certain piercing quality. He himself had opened the door to Range, and was apparently the only person in the house. After a long minute he spoke:

"I ain't askin' your name, for I don't want to hear it. My name's Nathan Gray."

"I came here because I knew who owned this ranch. I wanted to see you."

"No, you didn't, an' I haven't no desire to see you, neither. You've partook o' my food an' you've warmed at my fire. I can't hurt ye now. But in the mornin', when the boys come back, they'll feel different. You got to pull out o' this at sunup!"

Range shot him a hawk glance, hard as iron, steady as steel.

"I'll go in ten minutes, when I've got my answer to one question."

"You can't move on to-night." The other shook his gray head slowly. "It's a wonder you wasn't froze to death reachin' here. What you aimin' to make when you set out?"

"Here. The ranch o' Nathan Gray."

Still the older mildness studied the young intensity.

"I guess you've forgot me, but I ain't you. I've heard o' you consider'ble this ten year past, but I never see you but once. 'Twas in a public place." His voice kept its kind slowness.

"The courthouse, where I was tried for my life an' sentenced to leave the territory," Range took him up evenly. "I did leave it—or mighty near—but I've come back, to hunt for your niece."

Gray's placid eyes rounded, but his voice did not quicken.

"You tell me the name o' that niece."

"Thyrza. Her mother was your sister, Thyrza Gray."

He did not fend any more. "What's your will o' her?"

Range hung in the wind an instant; then, with the courage that was in the courses of his blood, he told his story, without explanation or flourish, straight down to the bone.

Nathan Gray heard him, with unmoved face, to the end.

"You want to wed her?" he asked, in his noncommittal voice.

Range's gaunt face twitched; a great surge of red leaped into it.

"I want to see her safe," he said

simply. "I got that idea so fixed in my head there's not much room for any other—yet."

"You been joggin' round this country a fortnight huntin' her?"

"Yes."

• "Nine men out o' every ten in it could spot you a mile—you know that?"

"Yes."

"You made a goodish start a hundred miles or more beyond Dode's?"

"Yes."

"An' you was condemned an' sentenced justly? You did the act you was 'cused of?"

"You heard me that day own up to it."

"Do you deem the boys will drink in your love story an' let you run scot-free a second time?"

Range leaped to his feet. "Do *you* deem you've got me in the witness box to sweat out my secrets?"

Gray rose deliberately. "I'd like to shake hands with you." His ponderous hand reached for the other's lean one.

Range's lids smarted; he was no more than a little boy, reproved, forgiven. The two men held each other's hands in silence.

"I don't set my approval to your past, leastways that just behind you. But this comin' back for the girl— Well, you've done as a man should, an' I'll bear my part likewise toward you."

He walked the length of the cabin twice before he sat down again to begin with the inward voice of one musing:

"Me an' Thyrza was mighty close brother an' sister. She followed my fortunes all the way from Ohio here, ridin' in a prairie schooner while I walked by the cattle. On the trail she met up with Robert Dwight—a well-meanin' boy he was, but a weaklin'—an', there bein' a parson among us, wedded him 'tween two days, for all I could say again' it. It shook my trust in her affection to me, that did. He

drifted round considerable for a few years, then he died o' a fall an' Thyrza come back to me, with her little girl. I hadn't never wed. She was all the kin I had, an' I thought a good deal o' them both, specially the little girl." He passed his hand over his mouth.

"I lived over near Painted Rocks, then, and Thyrza—my sister—got 'quainted with a man in that town. Hell don't hold no meaner." He spat into the fire. "I forbid her to so much as look at him. She run off with him an' wed him. I never saw her again."

Range made a sound of sympathy. The other went on in his deep, slow voice: "I understood he killed her by inches. When she was gone, I tried to get the little girl, but she'd growed up some an' she'd promised her mother she'd stick by her stepfather an' he'd adopted her before some kind o' a court an' judge. So I was 'bliged to let her go with Mertice."

"Mertice? George Mertice?"

"Him. She's lived in his hotels, or dance halls, or whatever he's pleased to call 'em; an' waited on his customers an' danced for 'em an' sang for 'em, till last fall the community was sickened o' his ways an' drove him an' his pal, Bland, hotfoot over the mountain. He dragged her 'long, same as he done her mother before her, but she couldn't hold the pace; so he—runnin' from the sheriff, ye mind—dropped her on the trail to freeze or starve or go out any way she found handiest."

Range flung out his clenched fist. "That little sweet thing at—Mertice's!" "At Mertice's!" repeated the other somberly.

"Where is she to-night?" Range was on his feet as if he would rush out to seek her under the blighting moon.

"I've tol' ye," Gray went on, regarding, "because you've showed yourself fit to start again an' I won't have you handicapped."

"What do you mean?"

"You ain't goin' to wed a girl that's been at Mertice's."

Range's fist was in the other's face.

"She's as pure as that sky out there."

"At Mertice's?" Again that name of fear.

"In hell!"

"You can't touch pitch an' not be tarred, lad."

"She can!"

"You think so?"

"Am I a fool or a boy not to *know*? I've been runnin' these ranches since long before I was twenty, at Put-in-Bar, Dode's, Thieves' Fork— Oh, you never saw her!"

Nathan Gray watched him with odd care. "Yes, I have!"

"Then you're a fool!" savagely.

The other did not notice. "She's sweet, she's brave, she's got a lovin' heart—but she can't be innocent."

"She ain't ignorant, if that's your meanin'. How could she be, poor little girl, trailed after that animal?" His voice broke like a woman's. "But she's good. The sister said it, *she* says it, an' I'm sure of it—as—as death!"

The older man sighed. "Maybe you're right. You love her; that gives you a way o' seein' into her I'll never get." He stated this great truth simply, then he walked to a door in the back of the room. "You want to wed her still?"

"If she'll take me when she knows who I am."

"She don't suspicion nothin'?"

"Not a word. I've told her my name is Range. It's my middle name, but I've never used it."

"What you goin' to tell her for? You got to travel out o' the country—'tain't likely where you're goin' she'll meet your ol' pals."

The younger man laughed rather sadly. "It's my name, you see."

"Well"—with his unemphatic gravity—"I guess the folks back at Holt's Ferry called it a mighty pretty one."

"That! 'Twas years ago—I was a boy—" he mumbled confusedly.

The big ranchman smiled for the first time that evening. He flung open a door and called drawlingly:

"Oh—Thyrza!"

Again Range was on his feet.

"Here!"

"'Most a week. Rode up with an Injin an' his squaw. They was connected with that baby you've told 'bout, some way, an' picked her up from the last place where Mertice flung her down. She never mentioned none o' the things you've been relatin'. Just walked in an' begged shelter."

"You took her in—if she did come from Mertice's?"

For the first time the big fellow was pricked to heat. "Who do you think I am to shut the door agin' a woman—my own blood at that?"

A flicker of feet down some long room, then Thyrza was with them, thin and white as Range himself, but with that look of a life within beyond the touch of time or chance that had struck him by the fire. He could not speak; he could only hold her hand in a strange, grave silence, while she smiled at him in the tender way he remembered from his sick dreams. He heard Nathan Gray leave the room.

"I've mighty nigh died tryin' to find you, dear." He said it in a whisper. "I'm Jim Neal, him they outlawed."

"You shouldn't have come back." Her free hand she slid up along his arm.

"Ain't you surprised? Did Gray tell you?"

She smiled adorably as he had seen her smile at the Indian baby. "You told me yourself that night when we talked in the cabin, your face an' your voice."

"An' you defended me because you knew—"

"What hunted folks suffer."

"Thyrza"—he lifted her hand against his cheek—"I killed Crea!"

"You saved me that night, a life for a life."

He smiled as he had on Gray, his hard face softening wistfully. "You can't square things that way."

She gave him the deepest look of understanding. "No, you can't square things that way," in a creed as stern as his own.

"Thyrza, dear little girl!"—he put his arm about her and felt her shrink from him in the old way, then gradually loose resistance and slip down into the hollow of his shoulder—"I'm an outlaw——"

"So am I."

"You're an innocent one!" He crushed her in his hold. "But I can start again. I've got the force in me if only I have the courage for it. There's other places where no one can fling up what's gone against us. Shall we begin again together?"

Her mysterious eyes questioned in a search that pierced. "Would you go farther an' faster alone?"

"Listen! If you'll go with me, I can win back to be the man I was once, lookin' every one in the face, not skulkin' like a coyote. If I go alone—I'm a broken man forever."

Suddenly she flung herself free.

"You haven't been told—about me—I live——"

"At Mertice's. That life never touched you. You're white in your heart as that moonlight."

A piteous little cry came from her: "Look!"

He saw she held her arm toward the light, the sleeve drawn up above the scar he had noticed before.

"There was a man once—he was a friend of my stepfather's—of Mertice's—he tried to take me with him——"

"He knifed you?"

"I struck at him. In the struggle, I got that slash. I couldn't go with him. I'd have died first—an—I was all alone!" By voice and gesture and look she pleaded with him to understand.

He remembered how she had said, "It's my sign," and now, indeed, he understood the battles that had given her eyes their sad wisdom, and the victories that had worn through the flesh over her spirit, shining white within.

His arms around her trembled. "I don't need a sign, dear," he whispered, his cheek pressed down into her soft hair.

Her voice came up to him in broken murmurs of love. "I'll go anywhere in the world with you, Range—Jim—because you believed in me."

A Church For Sale

RIGHT patiently it bears its plight—

The signs that blot its pane,
The tarnished cross that once shone bright,
The dust, the weather stain.
So long a temple; now mere space
Cried in the common market place!

Hushed are the notes that wandered there

Sweet as a thrush's trill,
Prayerlike themselves, and following prayer.

The spoken words are still,
Yet, unappraised in noisy marts,
They echo, echo in men's hearts!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.

THE "OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS"

By Edwin L. Sabin

IT is a favorite habit of us Oslerized old people of forty and more to look backward and prate longingly of the good days of yore. Some of us even retrograde to candles and fireplaces, and pretend that these household inconveniences marked an era far superior in solid comforts to these latter days of electric lights and furnaces.

I'd like to see you other praters—excuse *me*, however—seated for an evening of candle in one hand and weekly paper in the other, or of toasting the feet in the fireplace and keeping the back warm with a shawl! One homeopathic dose in this wise would prove a cure, I wager. Privately speaking, I've been there. It has been my blessed privilege to spend a few weeks, now and again, in primitive surroundings which so closely paralleled the days of golden "back home" that we read by candle, lantern, or at best one kitchen lamp; toasted our feet in the fireplace or at best the kitchen oven; and bathed in a washbasin or the creek. And, by thunder, for a short time after that the modern tenement had a powerful appeal!

So much for the "good old days" in the flesh instead of in the fancy; and I have an idea that the "old-time Christmas" might be included. Should one go back and taste the substance of it, one would find that it was of a brand no better than the brand of to-day—and contained nothing that one couldn't duplicate if one wished to, except certain faces.

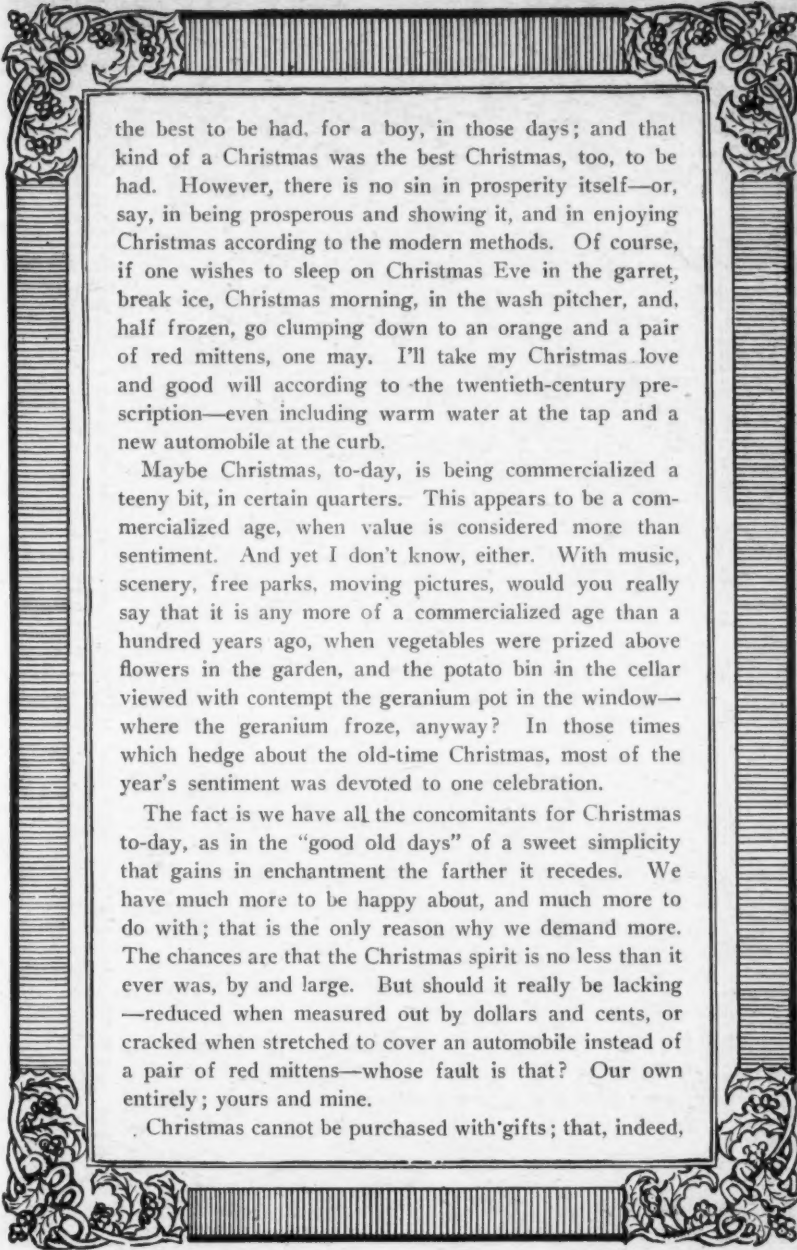
However, mine is not the hardened heart that would deprive us old folks of our luscious lingerings amid the phantoms of the old-time Christmases, "though lost to

sight, to memory dear." Visions of the gathering of the clans, of snow and bells, of feverish curiosity and tantalizing glimpses, of brimming Christmas Eves and of sudden awakenings into a Christmas dawn wherein all things good are to be revealed at last, of a morning pulsating with "Merry Christmases" and jollity, and of a day through which everybody is a millionaire in heart's content! Hooray for the old-time Christmas, from which succeeding years have strained avarice and cupidity and ingratitude and disappointment and all that! Heigh-ho! But those were the really Christmases. We don't have such Christmases any more. Nope.

Don't we? Well, if not, why not? Here is the world of human beings with more cause than ever before to be happy. There are critics who say that the world has been spoiled by prosperity, and that it takes more to please, at Christmas, than it used to. We have so much in between times that Christmas is no contrast to the general run of affairs. But if we've got more, and Christmas requires more, then we have it, haven't we?

I don't see that it is any detriment, or any bar sinister on the Christmas shield, that whereas we formerly were "pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw," we now are delighted with an automobile or a diamond necklace. When the rattle and the straw were a Christmas sufficiency, they demanded about as much forethought and planning and expectation as do the cut-and-dried gifts of to-day. Shucks, I remember when Billy Carmichael, a personal friend of mine, got for Christmas a brass watch with movable hands, slung on a brass chain with a brass-and-glass charm attached. No Christmas automobile or diamond necklace ever has come into our neighborhood, since, quite to cap the climax up-built, at one stroke, by Billy's brass watch, chain, and charm.

No, there I go again, idealizing the old-time Christmas in image of a brass watch. The brass watch was

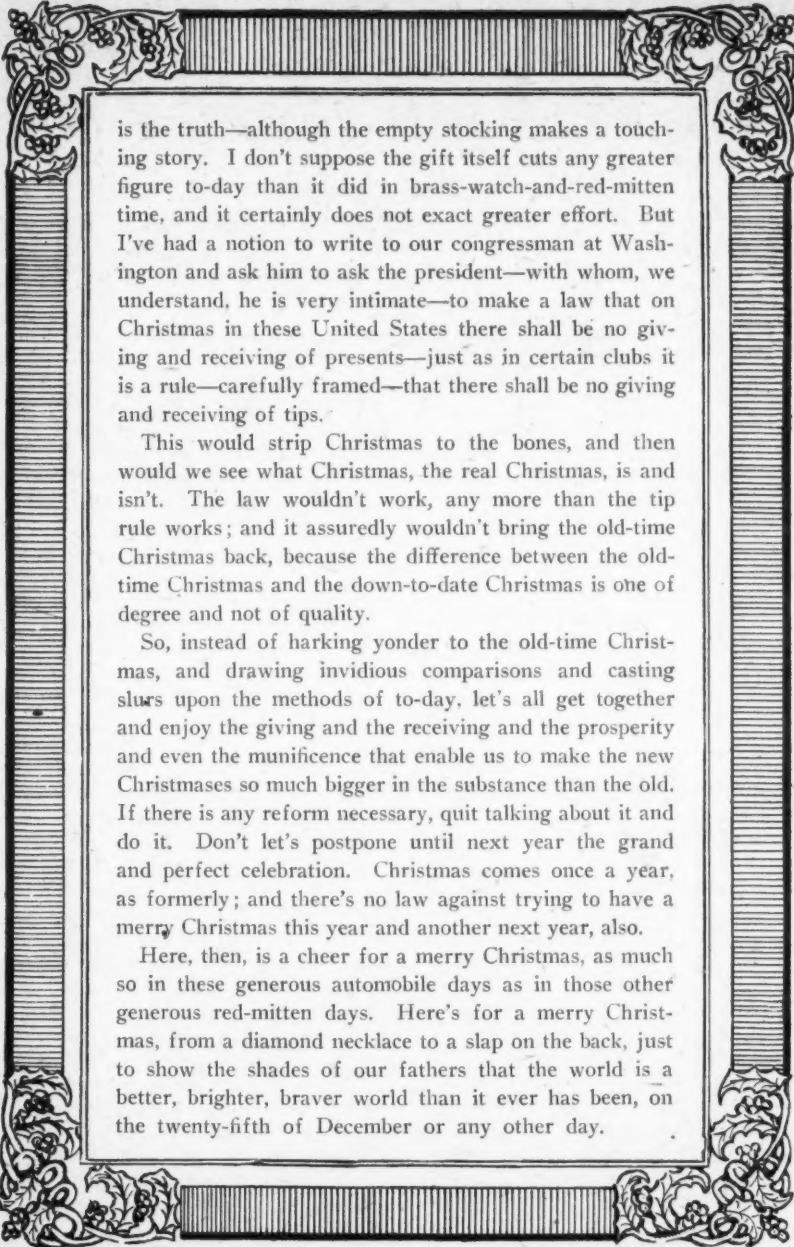


the best to be had, for a boy, in those days; and that kind of a Christmas was the best Christmas, too, to be had. However, there is no sin in prosperity itself—or, say, in being prosperous and showing it, and in enjoying Christmas according to the modern methods. Of course, if one wishes to sleep on Christmas Eve in the garret, break ice, Christmas morning, in the wash pitcher, and, half frozen, go clumping down to an orange and a pair of red mittens, one may. I'll take my Christmas love and good will according to the twentieth-century prescription—even including warm water at the tap and a new automobile at the curb.

Maybe Christmas, to-day, is being commercialized a teeny bit, in certain quarters. This appears to be a commercialized age, when value is considered more than sentiment. And yet I don't know, either. With music, scenery, free parks, moving pictures, would you really say that it is any more of a commercialized age than a hundred years ago, when vegetables were prized above flowers in the garden, and the potato bin in the cellar viewed with contempt the geranium pot in the window—where the geranium froze, anyway? In those times which hedge about the old-time Christmas, most of the year's sentiment was devoted to one celebration.

The fact is we have all the concomitants for Christmas to-day, as in the "good old days" of a sweet simplicity that gains in enchantment the farther it recedes. We have much more to be happy about, and much more to do with; that is the only reason why we demand more. The chances are that the Christmas spirit is no less than it ever was, by and large. But should it really be lacking—reduced when measured out by dollars and cents, or cracked when stretched to cover an automobile instead of a pair of red mittens—whose fault is that? Our own entirely; yours and mine.

Christmas cannot be purchased with gifts; that, indeed,



is the truth—although the empty stocking makes a touching story. I don't suppose the gift itself cuts any greater figure to-day than it did in brass-watch-and-red-mitten time, and it certainly does not exact greater effort. But I've had a notion to write to our congressman at Washington and ask him to ask the president—with whom, we understand, he is very intimate—to make a law that on Christmas in these United States there shall be no giving and receiving of presents—just as in certain clubs it is a rule—carefully framed—that there shall be no giving and receiving of tips.

This would strip Christmas to the bones, and then would we see what Christmas, the real Christmas, is and isn't. The law wouldn't work, any more than the tip rule works; and it assuredly wouldn't bring the old-time Christmas back, because the difference between the old-time Christmas and the down-to-date Christmas is one of degree and not of quality.

So, instead of harking yonder to the old-time Christmas, and drawing invidious comparisons and casting slurs upon the methods of to-day, let's all get together and enjoy the giving and the receiving and the prosperity and even the munificence that enable us to make the new Christmases so much bigger in the substance than the old. If there is any reform necessary, quit talking about it and do it. Don't let's postpone until next year the grand and perfect celebration. Christmas comes once a year, as formerly; and there's no law against trying to have a merry Christmas this year and another next year, also.

Here, then, is a cheer for a merry Christmas, as much so in these generous automobile days as in those other generous red-mitten days. Here's for a merry Christmas, from a diamond necklace to a slap on the back, just to show the shades of our fathers that the world is a better, brighter, braver world than it ever has been, on the twenty-fifth of December or any other day.

The Five Little Frankfurters

By Parker Fillmore

Author of "The Hickory Limb," "The Young Idea," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

MY invitation ran thus:
"You are cordially invited to attend a Dinner in honor of the Five Little Frankfurters at one by the Alarm Clock on Christmas Day. You may come early and work. Among the other Grown-ups present there will be only Yourself and Molly and Yours as ever,

PETER."

"P. S.—If you insist on bringing something, let it be candles—Christmas candles for the tree and ordinary ones for the table. Nothing else!"

Peter is poor, and lives in a tenement, but he gives the best Christmas parties I know anything about. Peter is a writer, and not a very successful one. He's incurably romantic, and, in this day of brutal realism, writes whimsical tales of kings and dukes and lovely princesses.

Editors say: "Beautifully done, but what we want nowadays are stories nearer home, of shopgirls, say, and policemen. Take O. Henry, now——"

And Peter, looking at them blankly, stammers out: "But I'm not O. Henry! I'm Peter Mackenzie."

That is true—Peter is himself, and I'm not sure that it isn't just being himself which gives to his parties so distinctive a charm.

To get to Peter's rooms you have to pass through the worst section of Hell's Kitchen, where want and squalor and vice meet you at every step. Stunted, ill-nourished children play in the gutters; youths, with faces already

bearing the marks of spiritual and moral wreck, loiter about pool-room doors and stare at you insolently as you pass; from behind broken shutters and torn shades you feel rather than see the gaze of furtive eyes that are ever on the watch.

Then you turn in at Peter's door and Peter receives you with all the grace of a courtier. His living room is the ordinary living room of a tenement apartment with sink, stove, and stationary tub. From Peter's manner, the stationary tub might be a cabinet of ivories, the sink a marble fountain. Peter waves you to a chair as he might to a throne. He exhibits to you the view from his window. Unaided, you might suppose that view an aggregation of gloomy gas tanks. Peter talks about Greek columns and moonlight on the Coliseum.

In much the same way, he tells you about his wonderful neighbors: the wooden-legged man at the corner, the little seamstress upstairs, the boys who bring him coal. The wooden-legged man turns out to be the proprietor of one of the pool rooms and the coal boys are recruited from the youths who frequent his establishment. No matter. As Peter talks, you begin to feel that on your journey hither you have misjudged the neighborhood sadly.

Poor Peter! He seems to be happy. To him life is always a wonderful adventure. That, I grant, is something; but not everything. I suppose he'll

never be able to marry Molly. And I don't suppose Molly will ever be able to marry him. Molly is a miniature painter, at present engaged in what is known as commercial art. She designs the pictures for Elfin Underwear that decorates the cars of the subway and the elevated. Molly is a good business woman, and if she had only herself to think about, could easily marry Peter, but off somewhere in the country she has a family of small brothers who need an unconscionable supply of shoes and stockings and bread 'n' butter. Poor Molly! That's how I always think of her, and yet I've never seen her anything but gay and bright and as full of the zest of life as Peter.

They are both so shoutingly happy for no reason at all that of course their parties are successful. I found them on Christmas Day as excited as two children.

"Enter, my lord!" Peter cried, in answer to my knock, and, with a deep bow, he ushered me in. I stood for a moment speechless, for the room had been transformed into a woodland bower with garlands of ground pine and great bunches of glistening laurel.

"My little brothers sent me a barrelful from the country," Molly explained. "Isn't it lovely? That's right—give Peter the candles. When they're arranged, we'll be all ready. You help Peter. I must finish these wreaths."

"We be three artists," Peter said, "whom the world has not yet crowned with laurel. A fig for the world! To-day we will crown ourselves!"

"Who are the five little Frankfurters?" I asked. "And what are we going to give them to eat?"

"Roast chicken yum-yum!" Peter said, answering my last question first. "Can't you smell it this blessed minute? You will when Molly opens the oven door. Before chicken, porridge with sugar and milk. That's because soup is an acquired taste and the little

Frankfurters have had no chance to acquire it. Also mashed potatoes and beans and bread 'n' butter in unlimited supply. For dessert, jelly and bread. Did you know you were going to assist at so splendid a repast? Moreover, as a special secret, let me tell you that there are two fowl a-roasting, and the five little Frankfurters are expected to consume only the larger one."

"But why Frankfurters?" I persisted.

Peter laughed. "Because they're like a string of sausage, five of them, one right after another, the oldest eight, the youngest three. Besides, the family name is Frankfurst."

"They're some starving youngsters Peter has just found," Molly explained. "They were almost naked. They hadn't been out of their miserable room since the first snowfall because they hadn't a shoe or a stocking among them. We had an awful time getting them a few clothes. Every mother we know had just given away every shoe and dress and little pair of pants she could spare. We begged some things at last, didn't we, Peter? You'll laugh when you see them! Oh, I tell you, we're going to have some party this Christmas! And what do you think?" Molly went on. "Peter has finished a new story about a princess and a sewing-machine man. It's wonderful—the best thing he's ever done! He'll read it to us after the party."

Molly is nothing if not loyal to Peter. Suggest shopgirls and prize fighters to her and see what happens!

There was a knock at the door, and Peter, glancing at the alarm clock, murmured: "It can't be the Frankfurters yet. Their mother's not to let them come till one."

He opened the door and at once exclaimed: "Ah, Miss Nixon! A merry Christmas to you, madam! Won't you come in?"

A quietly dressed, middle-aged



Once inside the door, Josie, the oldest, held up her finger and whispered: "Now!" and, as her finger dropped, they chorused: "Merry Christmas!"

woman entered. From her manner and general appearance, I knew what she was before Peter introduced her as a neighborhood visitor from the Charities. As she saw the table and the festive decorations of the room she hesitated.

"Come right in!" Peter urged. His words were all they should be, but his manner showed a trace of uneasiness.

"Am I intruding on a party?" the newcomer asked, looking from Molly to me. We both had on our wreaths. Peter's was still in his hand.

"Not at all!" Peter said. "Er—ah—in fact, the party isn't for half an hour. Pray be seated. And—and won't you have a wreath? We are all having

one." He offered her the wreath in his hand as if it were an ice or a cup of tea. Undoubtedly Peter was a little flustered.

Miss Nixon smiled faintly. "If you're sure I'm not intruding, I'd like to talk to you a few minutes. It's about the Frankfurst family. I think I've talked to you about them once before, Mr. Mackenzie. Do you remember?"

Peter ruminated. "Seems to me I do. There are some children, aren't there?"

"Yes, five and a baby. They're attractive, promising little youngsters, and we're trying hard to save them."

"It's a worthless father, isn't it?" Peter asked.

Miss Nixon nodded. "For five years we've done everything possible to make him support his family. He's not a drunkard, but he's weak and lazy, and he's lost all sense of family responsibility. He's perfectly willing to lie down and let other people take care of his wife and children."

"But the mother, Miss Nixon?"

Peter spoke a little anxiously. "Isn't she all right?"

"Yes, I think she is. But we can't make her see that it would be for her own good as well as for the children's to give up her husband or, at any rate, to give him up until he wakes to the fact that he owes her and his children some little responsibility."

"What are you trying to do?" Peter asked.

Miss Nixon explained. Her manner was terse and a little dry. To her this was one case in many, and she had classified it scientifically. She knew whereof she spoke, and we listened to her with due respect.

"The baby," she said, "is ill and the mother ailing. They both need hospital attention. We have told Mrs. Frankfurst that we will take care of her and the baby if she will give us the five older children for six months. At the end of that time, if the father is able to provide a home, we'll return the older children."

"And if not?" Peter asked.

"Then we provide for the children permanently."

"Is there any likelihood of the father getting to work?"

Miss Nixon sighed. "A chance—not a very good one, but the one thing we've got to go on. We have had a few cases where taking away the wife and children for a time has brought the man to his senses. If this doesn't, we feel that nothing will, and, of course, if nothing will, the sooner the children are properly taken care of, the better it will be both for them and for the

community and for the country at large. But we can't make the mother see this."

Molly had not yet spoken. Now she said: "I suppose the mother wants to keep the children herself."

"Yes."

"Isn't that commendable, Miss Nixon?"

Miss Nixon answered a little emphatically: "It may be commendable, but it doesn't solve our problem. A woman can't go out working to support her children and at the same time stay home and take care of them. If there's one thing we have found out in the last twenty-five years it is this: children need to be taken care of."

It was Molly's turn to sigh. "I see."

"Our offer," Miss Nixon continued, "is in the nature of an ultimatum. Two days ago the mother agreed to give us the children provided we let her keep them over Christmas. She had to agree, for they were starving and practically naked. To give them food and clothing just at this time, far from being a kindness, would probably be the means of making the mother refuse this last offer of ours. The morning I saw you I was going about asking people to keep hands off." Miss Nixon paused. "I've been working for two years to save those children, and I felt sure I was going to get them to-morrow. Now I don't think I am. I've just seen them, and I find some one has given them clothing, and they are all washed and combed and ready, evidently, to go to a Christmas dinner."

Miss Nixon looked at us, and we, our guilt betraying us, looked stupidly at the table set for five places.

"Oh, I say!" Peter exploded. "They ought to have something to eat on Christmas! Everybody ought!"

For the first time, Miss Nixon showed a little impatience. "But the mistaken idea, Mr. Mackenzie, this sort of thing puts into the mother's head! Here is a

new friend who, she thinks, may tide them over to-day and to-morrow and the next day. By that time some one else may come along. This will be excuse enough to refuse our offer for the children, and to lose the opportunity of testing out the man once and for all. Pretty far-reaching in results. And don't you see the pauperizing effect of the whole thing? She's a decent woman, but already she has learned that she can excite pity and charity by exhibiting the nakedness of her children. She hasn't told me who her latest benefactor is, but she says there's a kind gentleman who is interested in the children, and she thinks now she won't have to give them up to-morrow." Miss Nixon rose to go. "I have come to you, Mr. Mackenzie, to ask your help in persuading her to give us the children when we come in the morning."

"But, Miss Nixon," Peter cried, a little wildly, "answer me honestly. Don't you think that all kids ought to have a good time on Christmas?"

Miss Nixon looked at Peter and laughed and her laugh was so full of kindness and understanding that it loosened the tension under which we had all been struggling.

"Mr. Mackenzie," she said, "please don't make me answer that! I'm trying awfully hard to do my duty in this case, and I know just what my duty is. Perhaps, though," she added, "your duty may be different from mine."

When she was gone, we sat looking at each other, silent and crestfallen.

"Peter," I ventured at last, "how could you, after Miss Nixon had asked you not to?"

Peter shook himself impatiently. "I haven't given them anything to eat—yet!" He looked at the table unhappily. "Besides, she didn't exactly ask me because at that time I didn't know them. In telling me about another case, she mentioned the Frankfurts. I thought I'd take a look at them, and

the little beggars were so appealing that I swear I forgot all about what she had said, and before I knew it—" Peter broke off. Then, to hide his discomfiture, he began to scold: "These Charities people don't know everything! They make mistakes sometimes! Charities or no Charities, every child in the world ought to have a good time on Christmas! Don't you think so?"

Yes, Molly and I both thought so, but, to save us, we couldn't find words gay enough or loud enough to scatter the gloom that had gathered in our hearts.

Then suddenly we had something else to think about, for there was a shuffle of small feet in the landing outside, a timid knock on the door, and a shout from Peter:

"Quick! Draw the shades and light the candles! Here they are!"

II.

Yes, there they were, the whole string of them, from Josie, eight years old, as we soon learned their names, down through Clara, Eddie, Jimmie, to little three-year-old Louise.

"Come in! Come in!" Peter cried, and they came, looking a little shy, but smiling and happy.

Once inside the door, Josie, the oldest, held up her finger and whispered: "Now!" and, as her finger dropped, they chorused: "Merry Christmas!"

"You darlings!" Molly exclaimed.

Any woman would have called them darlings, for they were the chubbiest, rosiest, cleanest little youngsters imaginable. Their skins were still glowing from a recent scrubbing and their hair stood out from shining scalps in soft, feathery little tufts. They were not like any children I had ever seen in Peter's neighborhood; partly, I suppose, because they were clean, but, more than that, because they were well formed and apparently well nourished.



"Eat slowly!" we kept admonishing, at first on their account, but soon on our own.

Molly gloated over them one by one, patting their arms and bodies, and expressing approval in those inarticulate little noises with which the instinct of motherhood expresses itself.

They were grotesquely costumed, but I think we scarcely noticed this until Molly suddenly cried: "And their clothes! Do you see their clothes?"

Then we looked, and as we looked, we laughed. We had to laugh, for they were in low-cut little summer dresses

and airy blouses over heavy winter underwear. Long-legged drawers took the place of stockings, and, on their feet, summer sandals the place of shoes. The smallest of them had neither dress nor blouse, but just the winter underwear—a double set as we found out later—and pinned about her shoulders a baby's shawl of French flannel.

"And the littlest one!" Molly cried. "What's her name? Yes, Louise. Do you see Louise! Peter, a piece of pa-

per! Quick! I want to sketch her for Elfin Underwear! Don't you see? I'll have a snow scene, with a shivery child or two in furs, then Louise just as she is here, and underneath the words: 'A Child Who Is Dressed in Elfin Underwear Needs Nothing More.' Oh, isn't she adorable!"

She was, and we three grown-ups stood looking at her and laughing until her baby face changed and her lips began to quiver.

"Louise!" Molly crooned, gathering the child in her arms. "You're not crying, are you? What's the matter?"

Sobs prevented Louise from telling, but Josie, the oldest, who was spokesman for the clan throughout, offered a plausible explanation.

"Louise thought she was going to get something to eat," Josie said.

In dismay we turned to the others. Their expressions, too, had changed. They were standing, all a-quiver, like excited little hounds, their noses in the air, sniffing the scent of roasting chicken that was rising in whiffs from the oven. We had certainly forgotten our duties as hosts.

Peter tried hard to cover our confusion. "Dinner is served," he announced, with all the dignity of a gorgeous butler. "Will the ladies and gentlemen be seated."

"You better put me between the boys," Josie suggested. "Their manners ain't very good."

"I'll take Louise," Molly remarked. She seated herself at the table, with the child in her lap. "Now, Peter, we're ready. Porridge first."

"H'm!" grumbled Peter! "Aren't you going to help serve?"

"No, Peter," Molly said firmly. "You two will have to serve. I'll have all I can do taking care of Louise."

The porridge course was simple enough. They finished their bowls quickly, and we gave them no second

portion. They might have gone on indefinitely on porridge alone, for, besides being unpampered, they were fearfully hungry. We really didn't know how hungry they were until they began on the dinner proper.

The plates of bread 'n' butter already prepared disappeared in two minutes, and from then on I did nothing but cut bread and spread butter, while Peter carved chicken and served vegetables.

"Eat slowly!" we kept admonishing, at first on their account, but soon on our own.

We labored under Josie's directions. "Clara wants some more chicken," she would say, and then add: "Say, 'Thanks,' Clara. Eddie's out of bread, but don't you give him none, mister, unless he says, 'Please.' Don't you grab like that, Jimmie! You won't get nuth-in' if you grab, will he, mister? Will you please give me some more potato and gravy? Oh, thank you, mister!"

Funny little Josie! The responsibility of family manners lay heavy upon her. She was the only one of them all whose thought was not entirely taken up with eating. She did pretty well in eating, but, even so, between her endless "pleases" and "thank yous" she could scarcely have managed to get more than half the number of mouthfuls the others were stowing away.

Molly did nothing but feed Louise. Throughout the dinner she kept up a sort of monologue addressed partly to Peter, partly to Louise:

"Now a little bread, dear. That's right. Now some nice chickie and potato. Why, do you know, Peter, she's so hungry that every time I give her a bite of bread her little lips close on my fingers. Not so quickly, dear. You may have all you want! That's a good child."

Suddenly Molly spoke in a different tone. "Peter!" she said. "Peter!"

Peter looked up, with the carving knife in his hand, and I paused in my

bread cutting. Molly was glaring at Peter with eyes that snapped and blazed.

"Peter Mackenzie, I think that woman ought to be choked! These children are starving!"

Peter was a little slow in understanding. "What woman?"

"That Charities woman! She's nothing but a cold-blooded machine! And she's trying to make you into the same thing! What's more, Peter Mackenzie, if you listen to her, I'll never speak to you again!"

"Why, Molly!" Peter murmured, a little weakly. In the flush of work, both he and I had forgotten Miss Nixon, as a criminal, no doubt, forgets for a moment his guilt. Now, at Molly's words, Miss Nixon seemed to rise before us like an unwelcome ghost, and we knew not where to turn to hide us from the reproof of her cold, accusing eye. For us the joy of the party was dimmed. Conscience began its dark work.

"But, Molly," Peter protested, in that idiotic fashion a man has of defending a stranger once some one attacks him, "you oughtn't to speak of Miss Nixon in that way. She's broadly experienced in social work, and, besides that, she's kind and sensible."

"Peter Mackenzie," Molly stormed, "will you stop always talking about that woman!"

Peter tried to say it wasn't he who had introduced the subject of Miss Nixon, and Molly was in a fair way of bursting into tears when we were all brought to our senses by the needs of the five little Frankfurters. It was Josie's voice that broke the spell of our misunderstanding.

"Say, mister, Clara says durst she have another piece of bread and gravy. Say, 'Please,' Clara. And Eddie wants some more chicken. And Jimmie won't get no jelly if he grabs, will he, mister?"

Peter and I went back to work with hearts that were a little heavy and that grew heavier as the afternoon wore on. Was Peter's party to be the immediate cause of depriving these children of their chance in life? And, if so, was it not upon our souls that the responsibility rested?

Gorged at last to their utmost capacity, the five little Frankfurters stopped eating just as Peter was about to attack the second chicken, and as I began cutting the last loaf of bread. They got down slowly from their chairs and began to walk about a little unsteadily. Louise, in a costume that showed to advantage the lines of her small figure, was visibly swelled.

"And now," Molly said, "who wants to see a Christmas tree and the pretty things Santa Claus has brought?"

"Where? Where?" the five little Frankfurters shouted.

"All close your eyes," Molly ordered, "and wait till I tell you to open them. Josie, you make them close their eyes."

Josie was a strict disciplinarian, and while she was saying: "Now, Jimmie, don't you peep! You better watch out, Clara, because if you look, you'll get struck dead, won't she, mister?" Molly took down the curtain that was hiding a little Christmas tree in the corner, and she and Peter lighted the candles.

"Now!" Peter shouted, and the five little Frankfurters, opening their eyes with a pop, gasped out: "Oh! Oh!"

Josie expressed herself further. "Oh, mister," she said, "ain't it pretty?"

It was a pretty little tree, hung with tinsel and bright-colored balls. Piled around it on the floor were the games and books and toys that Peter and Molly had collected from the mother who had donated the underwear. There were so many treasures that each child had a first choice, and then a second.

The distribution of toys usually marks the close of a Christmas party,



"Now!" Peter shouted, and the five little Frankfurters, opening their eyes with a pop, gasped out: "Oh! Oh!"

but at this party the five little Frankfurters stayed on in the warmth and comfort of Peter's room as long as we let them. They played quietly; they returned again and again to the dazzling beauties of the tree; they took turns in blowing out the old candles and inserting new ones; Louise even took a little nap in Molly's arms.

We sent them home in the late afternoon, each with a Christmas stocking of goodies as a last surprise. They were about to go when Molly thought of something new.

"Peter," she asked, "have you a large tin pail?"

Peter had.

"I'm going to send that other chicken and the rest of the vegetables to the mother. And there's nearly a whole loaf of bread, isn't there?"

"But, Molly," Peter protested, "that's what we were going to eat ourselves! We haven't had a bite!"

"Peter Mackenzie," Molly scolded, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You're as bad as that woman! Between you, you're simply determined to starve this poor family to death!"

Peter sighed unhappily. "Now, Molly——" he began.

"Don't talk to me!" Molly snapped. "I'm busy!"

She packed the remaining chicken and the vegetables in the pail and gave it to Josie with the instructions: "You must bring back the pail, Josie."

"Sure I will!" Josie promised; and then, as the little cavalcade started, Josie bid us each farewell with a grateful: "Thank you, missus; thank you, mister; thank you, mister!"

III.

They went, and we three grown-ups, left to ourselves, sat down rather heavily.

"H'm!" murmured Peter, in a tone of assumed gayety that deceived nobody. "Nice party, wasn't it?"

"The five little Frankfurters will probably never forget it!" I went on, with hollow enthusiasm.

Molly began daubing her eyes with her handkerchief. "Peter Mackenzie," she wept, "I'm having a horrible time! It's the worst Christmas I've ever had, and—and I wish I were home with mother and the boys!"

"Molly," Peter protested, "don't say that!"

"I will say it!" Molly insisted. "Your Christmas party has been just horrid, and it's all that woman's fault, too!"

"We'll get something to eat," Peter suggested. "Then maybe we'll feel better. Let's all go out to the delicatessen. The air will do us good. Besides, I haven't a thing in the house but coffee."

Molly declared she wasn't hungry, but Peter was firm, and presently she put on hat and coat and we started out.

It was already dusk. As we reached the street, Peter stopped us a moment to look across at his gas tanks. "There'll be a moon later," he told us, "and the effect is wonderful. It's like moonlight on the Coliseum."

Ordinarily, when Peter talks about his gas tanks, Molly gasps an incredulous, "Is that so, Peter?" but to-night she said nothing.

At the delicatessen store we settled finally on sausage. "Piping hot sausage," Peter said, "and bread 'n' butter and coffee are a good enough Christmas supper for any one. What do you say to frankfurters, Molly?"

Molly gasped. "Peter Mackenzie, if you call them that, I won't eat one of them! I'd as soon eat baby!"

Tears again threatened, and Peter hastened to correct himself. "I should have said wienerwurst. That's what I meant." And he gave the order: "About three dozen wienies."

We returned to Peter's rooms and Peter began putting the place to rights, talking and laughing and making a great noise in a way that was intended to be an unmistakable imitation of a cheerful man.

"And now," he said, "first of all we'll have to wash some dishes. Then Molly can make the coffee on the gas burner, and we'll broil the wienies over the glowing coals."

But Molly was not to be cheered. "Can't we all rest a few minutes?" she begged. "I'm tired. And turn the light down, please."

I think we were all tired, for we sat there in the dim light, silent and listless, the only sound in the room the blatant alarm clock that went on shouting, "Tick! Tick! Tick! Tick!" as if that were the one thing in life worth saying.

We were aroused by a knock at the door. Peter opened it, and in a moment we heard a woman's voice saying: "Good evening, Mr. Mackenzie. Here is your pail, and thanks very much."

"Mrs. Frankfurst!" Peter said. "Good evening! Won't you come in?"

He held wide the door and a woman entered. At sight of us she hesitated.

"These are my two friends," he said, "who helped me this afternoon with the children. I'm sure they'll be glad to see you. Sit down, Mrs. Frankfurst."

Peter raised the gas and we saw the newcomer plainly. She had the slight figure and round shoulders of a woman who has nursed many babies. Her face was still young, but pale and very worn. Her clothes were shabby and even scant, and her manner had that air of timid apology which extreme poverty stamps upon so many of its victims.

Molly moved over to her impulsively. "Mrs. Frankfurst, you have beautiful

children! I don't see how you keep them so clean and rosy!"

The mother's face lighted up. "They are nice children, aren't they? And, miss, they're never sick—none of them but the baby. They've been hungry sometimes, but I've always managed to keep them clean and healthy."

"They show that you take good care of them," Molly said.

Mrs. Frankfurst looked from one to the other of us. It was plain she had come with something on her mind.

"Mr. Mackenzie, sir," she began, "would you give me a little advice? I had about decided myself, but when the children came home and told me how kind you had been to them, I thought maybe I'd better talk to you about it because I want to do the right thing. And I thought you'd understand, too, because you're poor yourself or you wouldn't be living down here, would you?"

She paused and Molly went quietly back to her seat.

"You see, I've had an awful time this winter. I ain't been well since the last baby, and the baby's sick, and I ain't been able to work. It's this way, Mr. Mackenzie. The Charities want me to give up the children. But, Mr. Mackenzie, they're mine, and I don't want to give them up!" Her face quivered and her eyes filled with tears. "Don't you see, they're *mine*!"

"I don't blame you one bit!" Molly cried. "If they were mine, I wouldn't give them up to the Charities or any other old thing!"

"Molly!" Peter begged.

"Well, I just wouldn't!" Molly insisted.

"It's this way," Mrs. Frankfurst continued. "If only I was well and strong, I could work. I've always worked. Now what I want to know is this: Why don't they take care of them until I'm strong again and then give them back to me?"

She appealed to Peter, and Peter answered her quietly: "Perhaps they think it's your husband's duty to support them, Mrs. Frankfurst, not yours."

"But if I'm willing to, what business is it of theirs?"

"I suppose they think you've got enough to do just taking care of the children."

"But, Mr. Mackenzie, I've always taken care of them and worked out, too, except when I've been sick. You can ask anybody! I'm always working!"

We did not doubt that. Her careworn face and roughened hands were evidence enough of what she was saying.

When Peter spoke again, it was on another subject. "Why doesn't your husband do his share?"

Mrs. Frankfurst sighed. "Oh, he's just got out of the way of it, I suppose."

"Mightn't he get back into the way of it if you were to leave him for a time?"

"I don't know. Maybe so. The first two years we were married he was all right. He used to work steady. He was a truck driver. Then he lost his job, and he ain't never seemed able to hold another one. He works a few days and then he turns up late some morning and they fire him. The Charities have been wanting me to leave him, but I don't see how I can. Don't you know he's kind of helpless, and he depends on me, and he's never unkind to the children. Oh, if he was unkind to them, I wouldn't stand him a minute!"

In a neighborhood where active brutality is common, the Frankfurst type of man is, I suppose, looked upon as something admirable. At any rate, his wife spoke as if it were. Molly snorted and Peter cleared his throat.

"Do you know, Mrs. Frankfurst," he said slowly, "you're not really giving your husband a chance to make good? You're willing to let him sit back while



"I know just how you feel," Molly told her. "I have four little brothers that I support, and I wouldn't give them up for anything!"

you support the children. Isn't that so?"

The woman looked at Peter a little defiantly. "That's what the Charities are always saying! I don't see what it's got to do with it, either! Of course I'm willing to work for my children! Why not? They're mine!"

"You'd go out every day to work, wouldn't you?"

"You bet I would if only I was strong again!"

"And I suppose you can't see why the Charities people don't want you to."

Mrs. Frankfurst wagged her head knowingly. "Oh, yes, I see, all right! They want to get my children away from me—that's what they're after!"

"No, no," Peter said gently. "It's not that at all, Mrs. Frankfurst. The Charities people would rather have you raise your own children than have any one else touch them."

She looked at Peter dubiously. She wanted to trust him, but fear was clutching at her heart, and ignorance limited her understanding. "I'd like to know how you make that out," she said.

"You will in a minute," Peter told her. "Now listen to me. Didn't the Charities find jobs for your husband year after year until they got out of patience with him?"

Mrs. Frankfurst hesitated. Peter waited, and at last

she answered: "Yes, I suppose so."

"You know they did, Mrs. Frankfurst. That was because they wanted to give him every chance to support his own family. If he had kept his jobs, you wouldn't have had to go back to them for help, and then, don't you see, they could never have asked you to give up the children? Isn't that true?"

Peter paused again until she made the unwilling assent: "Maybe you're right."

"Of course I'm right, Mrs. Frankfurst. Now they won't give him any more jobs because they say he's worthless. They've done all they can. But they think that perhaps you can do something more. They think if you

leave him for a time, he may wake up and be a man again."

Impatiently she swept aside what Peter was saying. "I understand all that, Mr. Mackenzie, and maybe they're right! Maybe he would wake up! But don't you see, sir, it's not him that I'm thinking about? It's the children! I don't want to take no chances with my children. They're mine! Now, what I want to know is this: Why won't the Charities take care of my children until I'm well and able to work for them, and then give them back to me? That's what I want to know!"

She had asked the same thing before, and Peter, evidently, had not answered her. He tried again in another way.

"Mrs. Frankfurst, if you were out all day working, who would look after your children?"

"Josie would. Josie's getting to be a real big girl."

"But Josie's only a child, and she needs a mother herself."

"I don't see what you mean, Mr. Mackenzie. I don't see why Josie wouldn't do. Josie's real handy about things."

Peter looked about a moment in silence. "Mrs. Frankfurst," he began, "there's a very good reason why Josie can't take your place, and I'm sure you'll agree with me when you think it over." He spoke quietly and slowly as he would to a child whose understanding was not very quick. "Mrs. Frankfurst, if it were daytime and hot weather, you and I could sit at this window of mine and look out into the street. And what should we see? We'd see dirty, hungry little children playing in the gutters. And while they're playing, what are they learning? They're learning bad words and worse things than bad words. You and I live here, and so we know the kind of things these children see and hear all the time. We know the kind of men and women that they see and hear. We know how

soon the bigger boys and girls become like men and women, and we know how quickly the little boys and girls copy the big ones. Now, Mrs. Frankfurst, why are these little boys and girls out on the street all day? I'll tell you why. For one of two reasons—either their mothers are too lazy or too vicious or too ignorant to look after them; or their mothers are out working for them, and so can't look after them.

"Now I want you to tell me, is there any chance in the world for children who see nothing day after day but vice and drinking and stealing and loafing? How can they grow up strong, healthy, honest, industrious? How can they? You and I know they can't, and we know they don't. We know what becomes of little boys like Eddie and Jimmie in just a few years. When we see the big boys who spend their days loafing about the pool room at the corner, we can't help knowing. And we know what happens to the little girls, especially if they're pretty. We know those lodging houses right on this block, and we know what they are, and we know how those women coax the little girls in with promises of candy and ribbons, and we know what happens to the little girls."

While he was speaking Mrs. Frankfurst had tried once or twice to interrupt and Peter had silenced her. Now, as he paused, she broke out a little frantically: "Yes, Mr. Mackenzie, I know all that! It's true! I know it is! But my children ain't like that! I keep them in—honest, I do! You can ask any one! I never let 'em run wild! I don't want them to learn all those bad things—you know I don't!"

She looked at Peter appealingly, and Peter shook his head.

"But don't you see, Mrs. Frankfurst, if you're not at home to look after them, they will learn all these bad things? How can they help it? It won't be their fault. You can't keep

them shut up in a room while you're out. You can now because they're babies, but not later. And poor little Josie can't take your place. She's only a child with the others. How can she protect the others when she won't know enough to protect herself? So, if you go off day after day, even if it is to support them, they will have to grow up in the street just like these children we've been talking about. Don't you see they will?"

For a moment she made no answer, then the sudden despair in which she bowed her head was answer enough. "Oh, Mr. Mackenzie," she sobbed, "I see what you mean! I see now! It's what Miss Nixon has kept telling me, and I didn't understand her! What am I going to do? What am I going to do? They're mine, and I want them, but I don't want them to go to the bad!"

The tears streamed down her face, and she rocked herself back and forth in an abandon of grief. Molly came over and put a hand on her shoulder.

"I know just how you feel," she told her. "I have four little brothers that I support, and I wouldn't give them up for anything!"

The Frankfurst woman peered eagerly through her tears. "Do you mean you work for them?"

Molly nodded.

"And do you take care of them, too?"

Molly shook her head. "I couldn't take care of them. I'm too busy earning money. But I don't have to take care of them because my mother's alive."

"And I ain't got nobody—nobody!" the other sobbed.

We could not comfort her, for we had no comfort to offer, so we had to let her sob herself out.

"I can't let them go!" she kept repeating. "They're mine, and I love them! But—but I'd do anything to keep them from going to the bad!"

You know I would, Mr. Mackenzie! Wouldn't I, miss?"

"I'm sure you would," Peter told her. "You've been a good mother, and you're going to do what's best for your children now."

She grew quiet after a time. Her body fell into sad, drooping lines. Her hands relaxed. She stared unseeingly at the little Christmas tree.

Presently she sighed. "I'm just thinking," she said, "maybe it has been my fault partly. I suppose I ought to have nagged at him more and just made him get to work on time." Half apologetically she turned to Molly. "You ain't married, miss, so you don't know how it is with a husband. You've got to keep at him and at him and at him until at last you just get so tired that it seems easier to you to go out and hustle yourself. I see now. That was the mistake I made. If I had just minded my own business and took care of the babies, and not tried to do his share, too, he'd have had to support us, wouldn't he?"

She paused and sighed, then went on as if thinking aloud: "And they ain't any reason why he shouldn't do it now. He's perfectly well and strong. It's me that's sick and worn out with babies and hard work and worry."

Her mental processes were slow, but at last they were in motion. She looked up now with sudden spirit. "They're right! I see now! I oughtn't to be working! I've got enough to do to take care of the children!"

She had been told this before, many times, but the telling had made no impression on her. Now for the first time she knew it, because she had been forced to grope it out for herself.

"They're right!" she repeated. The point of view of a whole life fell from her like a worn-out shoe. "It's him that ought to be working, and not me!" Indignation began to stir within her. Her voice lost its wail of hopeless grief.

She turned to Peter sharply. "They said they'd give him six months, didn't they? And then if he was able to support them, they'd give us back the children? They mean what they say, don't they, Mr. Mackenzie?"

Peter nodded. "Yes, they mean it."

A little flush crept over her face. She breathed hard. Her hands clenched. "Well, he's got to do it! That's all there is about it! And I'm the one that's going to make him do it, too! He ought to be ashamed of himself not supporting his own children!"

She looked about with eyes already filled with the vision of what she had to do. I don't believe she remembered us again until she rose to go.

"Good night, Mr. Mackenzie, sir," she said, very simply, "and thanks for explaining things to me. Miss Nixon can have the children in the morning. It's better to give them up for six months than to keep them and have them go to the bad—ain't that so?"

We told her it was, and Molly, putting impulsive arms about her, kissed her good-by.

IV.

The door closed and Molly turned upon Peter an adoring face that ignored my presence utterly.

"Peter," she said, "you're wonderful! You just are! The way you made that poor thing understand! And do you know, I wager anything she's going to put that man to work? That little woman means business!"

Peter shook himself with a happy laugh. "Molly, girl, we've had the escape of our lives! I've been feeling as guilty as a murderer all afternoon, and now I'm feeling—hungry!"

Have you ever made a Christmas repast on broiled wienerwursts and rich, steaming coffee? Try it next year! To be sure, it's not as cheap as it sounds—you see, you eat so much—but it's just as good as it sounds! I think we

were the three happiest people in the world that night as we talked and laughed and had another cup of coffee and listened to Peter's tale of the princess and the sewing-machine man.

Once during the evening Molly looked at Peter a little reprovingly. "Do you know, Peter," she said, "I think you were a little hasty in your judgment of Miss Nixon? She's broadly experienced in social work, and, besides that, she's kind and sensible."

"Well, upon my soul, I like that!" And Peter laughed as if Molly had made an awfully good joke.

"Don't you remember," Molly went on, "she said she'd do her duty and you'd do yours and yours would probably be different from hers? I see now what she meant. She expected you to talk to Mrs. Frankfurst, and she knew Mrs. Frankfurst would listen to you."

"Of course!" Peter shouted. "I see now! Let's drink a health to Miss Nixon—in another cup of coffee!"

The alarm clock ticked on and at last it was time for Molly to start home.

When we reached the street, we stood a moment in silence, for the moon was streaming full on Peter's gas tanks, making them as beautiful as Peter was always telling us they were.

"Peter, dear," I heard Molly murmur, "I've never had such a lovely Christmas! I was sorry at first not to get home, but I know now—now I shall always want Christmas with you!"

Peter stooped over her quickly, leaving me to view alone the Coliseum by moonlight.

Poor little Molly! Wouldn't you suppose that, for her sake, Peter would force himself to write about shopgirls and coal heavers? Poor old Peter!

Poor, indeed! What am I talking about? Peter and Molly are not poor! It's the rest of us who haven't what Peter and Molly have that are poor! Peter and Molly are rich!



Love's Leverage

By Izola Forrester

Author of "For Love of Lolita," "Cheyenne Charlie's Hostage," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

AS the ferryboat pulled into the Central New Jersey slip, Tinkham took another look at the telegram. It was brief and quite like Imogene. There were no superfluous words, nothing to give the recipient the slightest intelligent clew to work from. It merely said:

Meet Mary. Central New Jersey. Seven-ten p. m. Friday.

He had no more idea which of the millions of Marys in the world she meant him to meet than he had what particular train arrived at seven-ten, and from what part of the earth it came.

Yet he had taken the ferry and obeyed Imogene from sheer habit. Every one obeyed Imogene, and not from fear. From love absolutely. It was a pleasure, he told himself contentedly, to help dear old Imogene out of a fix. He would not only meet her particular Mary, but he would take her over the ferry and convoy her to the Grand Central Terminal, and thence to his sister's house at Orienta Point, Mamaroneck. As he left the boat and started toward the lower concourse, he hoped sincerely that Mary had a carefully detailed description of his personal appearance, and would be able to locate him all by herself.

The seven-ten train was from Baltimore and Washington. He stood near the gates, watching the straggling line of passengers with faith and trust, and suddenly he saw Molly Lambert. Not a meek, travel-worn Molly, by any means, but even as he had last seen her, self-sufficient and confident.

She was in brown. Molly always leaned toward brown in her attire. Perhaps because her eyes were large and brown and her hair just the right shade of chestnut to make it advisable. He had always thought there was something positively birdlike about her, not the motherly brooding bird, by any means, but the bright-eyed, vivacious, curious bird that alights outside your open window and chirps impertinent challenges at you, knowing it is safely out of reach. That was Molly.

Long before she reached the gate, he knew she had seen him. Yet she looked steadfastly beyond him as they met, and he had to stop her deliberately, grimly, hat in hand, even pale, if Tinkham could look pale.

"I've been detailed to meet you," he said.

"Well, I'm sure——" began Molly, and stopped, touched, possibly, by his expression. She set her lips closely together, considered the situation, and



He had to stop her deliberately, grimly, hat in hand, even pale, if Tinkham could look pale.

started ahead of him toward the magazine stand in the waiting room. "My trunks are checked through. I want something to read on the ferry."

Barb number one. That meant an absolute precluding of conversation between them on the ferry. Tinkham felt put upon and indignant. Some men had honors thrust on them, he thought bitterly as he picked up Molly's suitcase and waited her pleasure. She bought two magazines and a box of chocolates. When he offered to pay for them, she lifted her eyebrows and gave him one glance of rebuke.

"I prefer to myself, please, Mr. Broderick."

Tinkham said nothing, but he looked at her steadily, remindingly, as one might say, until the faintest tinge of color repaid him for that "Mr. Broderick."

They went upstairs to the upper deck. It was not the Liberty Street ferry, which crossed directly over to Manhattan. Tinkham had guided her toward the Twenty-third Street one, and she had not noticed the difference. He had scored one. For half an hour he would have her safe and alone on the river. Even though she deliberately placed a space between them, and opened her magazine, she could not entirely ignore his presence. Tinkham opened his late edition and perused it, with obvious contentment.

It was one of Imogene's farseeing schemes, he realized now. She had arranged the whole affair out of the tender solicitude of her heart, knowing that he loved Molly. But did he? He frowned, and glanced at her, met her own eyes regarding him with the most aggravating expression of accusation and silent reproach, and went straight back to his newspaper. No, decidedly not! No self-respecting man could allow himself to waste the whole splendid wealth of his highest, truest love on

a person like Molly. Molly was light-minded.

Their last meeting flashed across his memory vividly. They had been engaged just exactly twenty-four hours, and he had called to find her with Buell's arm around her, and Buell just pressing a farewell kiss on her upturned cheek.

After the hasty departure of Buell, Molly had turned on him indignantly.

"He's a wonderful boy, and I think the whole world of him, Tink Broderick. He's perfectly crushed over our engagement. I was just telling him before you came, and he asked if he could kiss me good-by only once, on my cheek. I think you're a brute to stand there and act like that."

"How many more are there?" Tink had asked calmly. "I hadn't realized that it was customary, that was all. I'll retire from the field of action until you've wished them all good-by, and given the vanquished their meed of consolation."

And Molly had told him then and there, with her dear eyes wet with tears and her hands clenched fiercely, that she had made a terrible, terrible mistake, that he was not the man she had believed him to be, and that she could never think of living the rest of her life with any one who was jealous.

All this raced through Tinkham's mind now, and he spoke his last thought aloud unconsciously:

"Did Buell ever get married?"

"Not yet," said Molly coldly.

"Awfully decent sort of a fellow."

Silence. Tinkham watched a large clock in a Jersey City tower and figured how much more time he had.

"Some way, I never thought we'd ever meet like this again," he began, with impersonal retrospection. "Life's funny, isn't it? You know that you gave me the first real jolt I ever had, sort of knocked me around so that I got the right focus on things in gen-

eral, and old Tink Broderick in particular. You probably did me more good than if you had married me."

She placed the cover firmly on the box of chocolates, and the magazine lay open on her lap. She was listening, he knew, although she stared out at the boat's white wake.

"I'd never done any serious work before that." Tinkham threw a deep, meditative note into his voice. "But it jolted me, as I say. You may be glad to know that it was your influence which finally started me into serious work."

"It couldn't be too serious," said Molly serenely. "A person of your temperament should devote himself to the most weighty issues of life."

Tinkham bowed his head and smiled, not a gay smile, but as a man might smile at the passing show, having renounced the world.

"I expect to leave for the Philippines inside of two weeks. They're putting a line of telegraph through the hill country in one of the wilder islands, and I rather feel that I have no right to refuse the commission."

"It is really—er—dangerous?" Molly's voice seemed slightly softened.

"It is certain death for some of us," Tinkham responded gently. "But it's best to make some use of one's life even



"These bits I managed to save from the wreck—you even begrudge me them, don't you?"

in relinquishing it. I don't like a mere quitter. But there's one thing, Molly. In case anything should happen, don't you know? and they ever come across what the bolomen may leave, I want this sent back to you."

He reached into his inner pocket and drew out a dark-green folder. Carefully he slipped back its tab and opened it, fold on fold, while Molly leaned forward, her eyes wide with troubled concern. She knew it very well, that green leather folder. Had she not sent it to him herself with a snapshot of herself inside? He drew the picture

out now and looked at it before handing it to her.

"You've got it all creased," said Molly.

"Kissing it. I kiss it a good deal—yet."

Molly said nothing. He produced several other small articles from the folder and named them gravely.

"A lock of your hair that curled just above your ear that night. Six violets. One pearl button from your glove—it came off in my hand when I tried to kiss your wrist. A phone slip from the club. Miss Lambert called me up that day. Your program at the cello musicale—"

Molly looked up at him unhappily.

"Please don't. How could you save them all just to show them to me some day and bring back all the worry and bother?"

"I've worried, too. I never expected to even see you again, and these bits I managed to save from the wreck"—he fingered them over tenderly—"you even begrudge me them, don't you? I hope they come back to you after I'm dead, all splashed. I shall put the folder, with all its contents, directly over my heart."

"It's horribly gruesome of you!" shuddered Molly. "You might at least wrap them in oilskin, just to be nice."

She turned her head and looked at him with the old dancing light of hidden mischief in her eyes, and a little tantalizing, one-sided smile.

Around them lay a world of mystery, a pearl-gray twilight undershot with rose and topaz light. The river had turned into a dreamland stream, a lustrous silvery gray, sprinkled with myriad reflections of shore lights and sky hues. On the Jersey shore the lights came out tremulously like far-off nebulae. Manhattan flung hers sky-high, a madcap, spendthrift genie. They spangled the towers and hung like glittering raindrops to the shore line.



Tinkham caught his reply, tossed back over one shoulder: "Bumped a freight barge."

Back and forth over the misty river the ferryboats plied like jeweled shuttles weaving some spell of enchantment between the two shadowy shores. The liners drowsed in their slips, tired cattle of the sea meadows. Overhead, a half-grown moon, with a penumbra of opal, shouldered its way out of the gray haze and tried to shine.

But all in the world Tinkham saw at that instant was an upturned, provocative face—Molly's face agleam with challenging witchery. He reached for her instinctively, pushing away her protesting hands, holding them both in one of his, his other arm gripping her shoulders firmly.

"Tinkham, don't, please, please, Tink! Somebody'll see you. Oh, Tink, you're hurting me!"

Even the last primitive wail did not disturb Tinkham's purpose.

"There's nobody to see," he said, and he kissed her, kissed her good and plenty for that last kiss Buell had taken and for every phantom kiss he had imagined since she had gone away. When he released her, Molly sat up very erect and stared at the river with wide, startled eyes. Only a Lackawanna ferry plowed near, but she eyed its pilot house with alarm.

"The man up there saw you."

"I don't give a rap hang if the whole world saw me! I don't care if all the ferries and steamboats and tugs line up and salute me, and they would salute me if they knew the truth."

Miss Lambert straightened her hat, tucked her loosened hairpins back into place, and moved out of reach, just as a dull, crushing impact came up forward, and the ferry listed, throwing her into Tinkham's ready arms. More than that, this time she clung to him, her face close to his, and Tinkham didn't care whether the bottom had dropped out of the Hudson River.

"What is it?" she whispered. "Tink, did we hit something?"

"I don't know, but it's all right. We're near the slip. Don't worry, dear."

Tinkham's arms tightened around her and he kissed her, this time without resistance; in fact, there was a distinct response. A deck hand hurried by, but Molly never struggled to release herself. Tinkham called out, and caught his reply, tossed back over one shoulder:

"Bumped a freight barge."

"What did he say?" Molly asked. The engines had stopped, and they drifted with the tide. "Tell me if there's any danger, won't you, Tink? I'm not afraid, only I want to know."

"You old darling!" murmured Tinkham happily. "There isn't a bit of danger. We've jolted a freight barge. I wish I could wrap a life preserver around you and save your life, but there's no such luck. Don't take your arms away. You can't help yourself now. I know you care, Molly mine."

When the boat rested in the slip, the two stepped off last of all the passengers. Tinkham hailed a taxi and gave the order to the Grand Central Station.

"Not the Grand Central, Tink." Molly leaned out of the window to correct him. "I'm going right up to Ninety-sixth Street to the Dewings, you know."

Tinkham hesitated.

"Imogene expects you out at her place to-night."

"Imogene, dear? It's awfully sweet of her, but I haven't time. I'm to be bridesmaid to-morrow at Connie Dewing's wedding."

Tinkham took off his hat and fanned himself. Life became a strange, fantastic blur, with only Molly's face as a tangible, kissable reality.

"Then who is 'Mary'?" he asked musingly. "Imogene wired me to meet 'Mary' at that train you came in on.

You were the only Mary on it for me. She always calls you 'Mary.' What shall I do? Somewhere there's a helpless, wandering Mary hunting me."

Molly's eyes regarded him with unspeakable mirth. There was a new expression about them, a look of possessive, all-forgiving understanding. Somehow, to look at her, one realized that no matter what absurdity Tinkham might be guilty of hereafter, Molly would always understand and be ready to straighten him out.

"Go and telephone to Imogene at once. Don't worry her, Tink. Just ask for Mary's last name."

She waited with flushed cheeks, following his tall, boyish figure until it was out of sight. Then she looked back at the ferry. As it lay there in the semidarkness, with its rows of lights and its shadowy, sweeping outlines, it might have been some golden ship of love's emprise that had brought them both safely to the haven where they would be.

When Tinkham reappeared, gave the Ninety-sixth Street number to the chauffeur, and stepped in beside her, she leaned forward eagerly.

"It's all right." He smiled at her. "Imogene's a good old sport. She sent another wire to head me off, and I missed it. Mary's changed her mind, and can't come, bless her erratic little

heart! She's forty-two, and a third cousin, from Washington."

He slipped his arm behind Molly, and tried to draw her head down on his shoulder as they swung out crosstown down Twenty-third Street.

"Wait a minute, Tink. I've been thinking while you were gone—about the Philippines, you know."

Tinkham's face lost its rapt look of contentment. He had forgotten the Philippines. Yet he used them again deliberately, as part of love's leverage.

"If you'll marry me in two months, I won't go."

"But could they get along without you, dear?" wistfully.

"They'd have to." Tinkham relinquished glory stoically. For a minute there was silence in the darkened interior as he drew her closer to him, and they looked out at the city, Molly's head on his shoulder. Then very softly she said:

"Tink, dear, I forgot to tell you: Buell's the bridegroom to-morrow, and they're both so happy! Connie's letters made me feel awfully lonely."

"Do the bridesmaids kiss the bridegroom as a matter of custom?" asked Tinkham.

Molly shook her head, laughing, and the taxi turned into Fifth Avenue, the street of night-blooming flower lights, just as Tinkham drew the front shade to shut off the chauffeur's view.



Valor's Better Part

WHAT political party are you affiliated with?" demanded the pompous official of the "cullud lady" who was preparing to register for her first vote.

"What's dat, boss?" she inquired.

"What political party," he repeated, "are you affiliated with?"

"Has I got to answer dat question, boss, before I can vote?"

"You certainly have."

"Well, den, I reckon I won't vote dis time, but he's a puffyckly nice white gentleman right in dis town."



A Gift of Christmas

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "The Legacy," "The Swan Song of Ivison's Youth," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. FUGSLEY

LIKE every other spot on the inhabited globe, no matter how smoke-begrimed, how dull, or how sordid to the outward eye, Salesport loved fairy stories. The passion for the tale of the golden princess and the eagle-browed prince expressed itself differently in the different sections of the community, and doubtless there were variances in the legend as interpreted by the individuals of these sections.

For example, in the slums that Salesport, by the mysterious working of the law of prosperity, had acquired along with its mills and its position in the industrial world, there were dingy women, widowed either by the act of Providence or by the errant fancy of their spouses, who said, with shining eyes of rhapsody, that if only they could get a baby from the society to help them pay the rent, they would have no further mundane anxieties; they referred not to any form of child slavery, but to the mutually beneficent arrangement with the orphan asylum whereby parentless waifs found a home and the home giver some slight pecuniary recompense.

There were girls in the mills who found fairyland in the swift-falling volumes of Mr. Robert Chambers and in the society columns of the *Evening*

Journal. There were longshoremen still attached to the barnacle-clad wharves of Old Salesport, where the shipbuilding hammers had long ago fallen silent and where the number of the fishing smacks dwindled year by year, for whom the enchanted pages opened at the popping of corks in waterside saloons. And in Old Salesport itself—Old Salesport, satisfied and a little pompous beneath its elms; Old Salesport, where every one's great-grandfather knew every one else's great-grandfather; Old Salesport, which persisted in thinking that history had stopped at the Civil War—even in Old Salesport the love of the fairy tale still abode.

There was no other explanation of the pleasure that Old Salesport took in the sight of young Doctor Gerstler's shingle upon the brick house in Main Street in which a witch-burning judge had once lived, and which had never since been degraded to the occupancy of any one of less standing than a retired scientist. For though rather inhospitable to strangers and suspicious of their manners and their ancestors—if not of their everyday honesty and decorum—Old Salesport wanted to see its fairy story enacted before its eyes. It yearned to watch the wooing of Brenda Armi-

tage by the destined fairy prince, properly accoutered and caparisoned. And Old Salesport, up to that hopeful September day when Doctor Louis Gerstler hung out the aforementioned sign, had been noticeably deficient in fairy princes to play "opposite," as the theatrical people put it, to Brenda Armitage.

Most of the native-born fairy princes, you see, were engaged in giving battle to the giants of capital or corruption in Chicago or Seattle or Rio Janeiro by the time Salesport began to feel pressed for one for Brenda. The town had suffered, like so many New England towns of the highest respectability, from a dearth of young men of the better classes. Desirable—unsurpassed, even—as it continued to think itself in climate, scenery, and historical association, there was no denying the fact that Old Salesport seemed lacking in those outlets and rewards for ambition which young men demand.

And, offering no scope to talent, it afforded no fit mate for Brenda Armitage. Old Salesport admitted the fact in the sigh of mingled relief and bewilderment with which it always hailed Brenda's reappearances from her tours, foreign and domestic. It was patriotically glad that she had not succumbed to any alien besieger, but it wondered why not. For, obviously, there was no one at home.

The minister of the Congregational church—of course, if Brenda married into the church it must be into the Congregational, or all her forbears would have risen from their graves in protest, back as far as that distinguished one whose "Infant Damnation Proved to the Satisfaction of the Youngest and Weakest Intelligence" had first placed the Armitage family among the intellectuals—the minister of the Congregational church was sixty-three, and a grandfather. In addition, he was a father and a perfectly good husband. He

couldn't play fairy prince to Brenda's rainbow princess. And all of Salesport's lawyers were likewise married—if one excepted Rory Callahan, whose father had been Judge Armitage's gardener; and, of course, democratic as Old Salesport declared itself to be, *that* would hardly do—even if Rory, despite his comparative youth, were not ridiculously obese and reported to be as fond of his pipe and bowl as the renowned King Cole. And all the officers in the mills were not only newcomers, but they came provided with female appendages; or else they were sons of these, and too young to be Brenda's fairy prince.

For, in a town where every one's great-grandfather had known every one else's great-grandfather, there was no denying that Brenda was twenty-eight. Remembering that, Old Salesport grew almost nervous concerning the dilatory methods of fate. Twenty-eight! Lovely, oh, very lovely, with that long, pliant body, those swift, sure, graceful movements, that glowing beauty born of the fire of energy; lovely, of course, Old Salesport loyally asseverated, remembering that it was quite eight years since Brenda had filled its heart with pride by leading all the girls of Mount Merry in the graduation tree-planting or daisy-chaining or whatever arboreal performance it was that Mount Merry College chose as particularly becoming for the young ladies who were to be made A. B.'s the next day. Eight years— She had, of course, been graduated rather young! Such a fine mind as she had!

If only Peter Waring had been different!

But Peter wasn't different. Peter was obstinate in being himself from year to year—in being so utterly himself that not even the most besotted sentimentalist of them all could read him into Brenda Armitage's fairy story. Of course, it would be a declension at best for an Armitage to marry into the

Waring tribe, but if only Peter had been different, the decline might have been forgiven. If only he had made the best of himself! But he hadn't. He wouldn't. He persisted in being just as queer and ineligible as it was possible for a man to be.

Every one knew, for example, that Peter had brains—but why wouldn't he use them advantageously, showily? He had had a better record during his terms at old Mr. Carman's Salesport Preparatory School and during those two—or was it three?—years, at Harvard, than Winthrop Boynton himself. But Winthrop—just look at him now, district attorney of Middleborough, and about to be nominated by the reform party for the governorship of the State—perfectly eligible for Brenda if he had not already married. If only Peter had been like that!

Or if, since he had actually settled down in Salesport and had continued to publish that moribund weekly which his father had started, if—since he had actually been so unambitious and so, oh, so queer, as to do that—he had only given the paper an up-to-date policy, made it a "power in State politics," made it a sprightly compendium of gossip, made it anything but what it was! But all that Peter had succeeded in doing with the *Gazette* was to offend the party in power to such an extent that the State advertising, of which it had been the vehicle in the elder Peter Waring's day, had been withdrawn from it and given to its conciliatory rival, the *News*. Oh, Peter had been hopeless, even to the eyes most eager to find in a native Salesportian a fairy prince for Brenda's obvious princess!

It was high time, Salesport insisted in its mind, that slow-moving Fortune



"You've taken your time!" Brenda informed him, as she gave him a slim, firm, white hand.

should gather up her skirts and prepare to do a little sprinting in the case of Miss Armitage. And slow-moving Fortune had responded to this impatient, voiceless suggestion from Salesport by introducing Doctor Louis Gerstler to the town.

Brenda had been home from Honolulu for a week when Doctor Gerstler arrived to play his part in the tournament of love and beauty. When it was said that Brenda had been at home a

week, it is also said that Miss Abigail Armitage had been at home a week. Brenda was entirely emancipated, so she thought, and was quite willing to travel in Hawaii or Palestine or anywhere else with no accredited chaperon. But Miss Abigail, although she loathed travel and longed during every hour of her foreign voyagings for her own garden and her own fireside, was, nevertheless, the slave of her idea of duty. A gentlewoman under thirty-five—an unmarried gentlewoman—should not travel unchaperoned; it was carelessness in regard to this fundamental rule of behavior that made American girls a by-word in Europe! As long as her niece was a restless flibbertigibbet, she would do her duty by her and prevent her being an addition to the long list of by-words.

The Armitage place was one of the show places of Salesport. It stood, plain and uncompromising, with its face full to Main Street. But behind the hedges on either side there were glimpses of terraces and gardens; there were piazzas, not built on the front of the edifice as is the habit of the vulgar, but discreetly removed from the gaze of the passer-by. Brenda could give a garden party to the whole of Salesport, old and new, when she was so minded, and there was no undue crowding of the paths and the lawns and the shrubberies. And the house was always glistening with white paint and with polished knockers and pale-green blinds. It was very unlike the Waring cottage, which, except for its general unkemptness, might have been the Armitage lodge, standing as it did upon one corner of the estate, with a straggling garden and lawn in front of it, and a piazza that had seemed on the verge of collapse for seven or eight years.

It was Peter Waring who told Brenda about Louis Gerstler's settling in Salesport. Peter, with an affectionate dog of mixed parentage at his heels—which

were slightly run down—wandered up to Brenda's when the lights from two-score of windows announced that the young woman was once again in residence. Peter knocked the ashes from his disreputable old pipe and secreted that comfortable companion in his shabby, bulging coat pocket as he let the great brass eagle on the Armitage door fall resoundingly. The maid who admitted him beamed. Peter beamed in return out of kind, humorous, blue eyes that seemed somehow the more kindly and the more humorous because of his old-fashioned, gold-rimmed spectacles.

"They're right in the library, Mr. Waring," said the maid, bubbling. Peter paused to enjoy her bubble and to comment on its cause.

"Seems pretty good to have them home again, doesn't it, Annie?" he said. "And the whole house open again?"

Then he went into the library and greeted Miss Armitage—Miss Abigail Armitage—with great respect and decorum. Afterward, he turned his attention to Brenda. She didn't look two years older, for all the lands she had seen and all the pleasure she had savored since he had taken leave of her in this very same room, with its leather-filled bookcases clear to the ceiling, its portrait of the judge over the fireplace, its profusion of autumn flowers, its air of luxury kept subservient to something better than luxury. No, she was not an hour less glowing, not an hour less vivid. Peter sighed in disappointment and relief. He always hoped that her beauty would be less poignantly disturbing to his heart, but he was always glad that the hour of decay had not yet struck.

"You've taken your time!" Brenda informed him, as she gave him a slim, firm, white hand. The sleeve of her white frock fell backward a little and showed the rounded arm. Pete's eyes were, for half a second, fascinated by that piece of modeling. Then he

dragged them up to Brenda's eyes, dark as pools, sweet and sparkling as wine, as starry winter nights.

"Why, you didn't get in until last night!" he replied.

"Twenty-four hours ago! You've taken your time." She insisted upon it. "Every one else who still survives in Salesport has been in to see us. I thought perhaps you weren't coming."

"You knew I was coming, all right," replied Peter comfortably.

He sat down and gazed at her with the frankest appearance of admiration and delight. He was about to surrender himself wholly to the pleasure of the moment when the dog, which had surreptitiously followed him into the library and had made a devious way to Miss Abigail under chairs and tables, gave sudden notice of his presence by barking at the white Angora that lay on the window seat. There was a good deal of time lost in restoring order and peace, and in ejecting Mutt—so Peter's dog was called—and when he returned to the contemplation of Brenda, there was something lost from the sybaritic quality of his pleasure.

"Oh, Peter!" Brenda was saying. "Not another mongrel! Not another!"

"To be sure," said Peter. "Why not? Mutt is a fine fellow—I'm sorry he frightened the kitten!—and it doesn't make him any less fine to call him ugly names. Come, confess now, Brenda, there's a lot of affectation in all this pure-bred-dog business!"

"Where did you get him?" demanded Brenda accusingly. She declined the controversy offered her.

"He belonged to a fellow I knew—a fellow who was fond of him. The owner— Oh, he went away, and he got me to look after his dog. That's all. But he's a good dog—"

"Where did his owner go?" insisted Brenda.

"I don't know," replied Peter, declining to meet Brenda's eyes, and making

friendly overtures toward the offended white Angora with his fingers.

"Peter, you've always been a silly, but you used to tell the truth! I know all about Mutt. He belonged to a tramp who was accused—oh, of an unspeakable, dastardly crime! And who was caught and almost mobbed, or lynched, or whatever you call it—and you—well, you brought them to their senses, and made them proceed according to law. And he took a cough in jail while he was waiting for his trial. And then the real—criminal—turned up. And you kept that poor old wreck at your house, and the dog, until he died—"

"Lord, Brenda, but you're as fond of your melodrama as ever! Have it your own way, though. Blow all the bugles for me, if you please, beat all the drums! Is she very difficult to travel with, Miss Abby, on account of her enthusiasms?"

"Why couldn't you send him to the Bide-a-wee?" asked Miss Abigail, who always came up two or three laps behind in any conversational race.

"Speaking of your travels, Brenda," said Peter, when he had smilingly shaken his head at Miss Abigail's suggestion, "there's a man settled in our town who has been at your heels for a year or so. Louis Gerstler. He was in my class at college. He's been out in the Pacific studying queer diseases. And now he's settled in Salesport. He says he always came up about two days behind you, in China and the islands. I said I'd bring him around. May I?"

"Delighted!" said Brenda. "Why on earth does he settle in Salesport?"

"He's doing something on industrial diseases now, I believe, and it seems that our mills, despite that millennial girls' club you started and deserted, furnishes a greater proportion of some fancy sickness than any other places of their size in the world. What do you think of that, you with your scorn of Salesport? So he's settled here. Be-



What she said to herself that night, as she stood once again in the big, square bedroom of her childhood, was that she was really beginning to be afraid that she would never fall in love.

sides, he says he thinks it is a good place for a physician—really a better chance for both general and particular work than in the big cities. You'll like him."

"What makes you think so?" demanded Brenda perversely. "I don't like people so readily!"

"You'll like him, all right," Peter said fatalistically, though he did not go on to say why.

"Well, I hope so," said Brenda.

She did hope so. Although she might not have expressed the truth in just that way, she was as anxious for the materialization of the prince as any lover of fairy stories in Salesport. What she said to herself that night, as she stood once again in the big, square bedroom of her childhood, was that she was really beginning to be afraid she would never fall in love.

"Isn't anything ever going to set me afire?" she asked herself.

Without fire, of course, one did not marry. But what on earth was she to do with her life and her youth and her energy if she did not marry? If she had only had a talent—but she hadn't! She couldn't write or sing or paint or even make little things out of balls of dirty clay and call

herself a sculptor, though she knew so many girls who were "going in" for sculpture now! And she hadn't the least desire to be a doctor or a lawyer or a real-estate broker or to enter any of the occupations which, so she read in the papers, women were more and more invading. She liked to manage pretty well; whenever she struck Salesport she organized something, generally something quite useful—the girls' club

in the mills, the women's street-cleaning auxiliary— Oh, she had organized lots of things! But her interest in them was transitory. Once she "got them going," as she put it, her zeal flagged. It would need a deep, personal affection, she knew, to keep her long absorbed in anything. Decidedly it was time for her to fall in love.

"Dear old Peter!" she thought at that juncture in her reflection. She smiled and sighed. She was very fond of Peter, with his impracticalities, his unambitiousness, his tranquil philosophy. He was one of the few unmarried men of her acquaintance who had never proposed to her. She was glad he had refrained from paying her that compliment. His abstinence had left her that desirable thing, a friend, in the world of the ardent and of the indifferent. And yet there had been times—brief moments—when she had almost been conceited enough to imagine that something more potent than habit and old, friendly affection vibrated in the air from Peter toward her. But in the turning of her head, it would be gone.

She remembered how, when she had been a small girl in frilly dresses, Peter, then unbelievably elderly—fifteen to her eight—had sometimes walked to the door of Miss Archer's school with her, defending her from the perils of street dogs and street crossings, protecting her with an umbrella from sudden showers, carrying books that showed a tendency to slip from beneath her arm. She had been rather proud of those attentions of the grown-up Peter, until she had made the mortifying discovery that he paid them on occasion also to Lizzie Flaherty, whose mother was the Armitage laundress.

"Just because I was a little thing, and needed some one to look after me," she said, smiling at the picture her memory had called up for her. "Dear old Peter—not Judge Armitage's daughter, not the pretty little autocrat of the school

and street—just a little girl who might feel afraid at the perils of her journey to school! But how mad I was when I saw that it made no difference whether it was I on my way to Miss Archer's or Lizzie Flaherty on her way to the public school or a stray dog that needed protection. What a little snob I was!

"There was the lame rooster," she went on reminiscing. It had been a rooster that the sporting element of young Salesport was training for a cock-fight and that Peter had rescued. He had refused either to return the bird or to fight its owner for its possession, she remembered. He had merely taken the rooster home and had defied ownership, sport, or any other sacred cause to come into his yard and get it. The funny old thing—how it limped around after him! He never minded being ridiculous, Peter!

And then there was his Aunt Jenny. Aunt Jenny had gone to the bad in parts remote from Salesport. Unfortunately, when the bad ceased to be alluring or possible, she had created a terrible disturbance in select Salesport society by returning to her brother's house, from which she had eloped fifteen years before. Poor Mr. Armitage had been bedridden then—it was just after his first stroke—and Peter had come home from college and was keeping the *Gazette* alive, and keeping the old man alive, and surrendering any dreams and aspirations he might have had on his own account for the sake of the peace and the pride of the stricken soldier who had given him life.

And Peter had taken Aunt Jenny in, and had taken Aunt Jenny out. He had walked the respectable streets of Salesport with her, and he had fetched her to church on Sundays; and when the longing for excitement had grown too great for Aunt Jenny and she had sought it in cheap, potable form at the side doors of saloons in the mill dis-

trict, Peter had found her and brought her home. And all the time he had kept the wrecked old man upstairs from realizing that Jenny's return to the fold of respectability had been shamefully incomplete. What a life for a boy of twenty-two or three!

"I wish I could fall in love with Peter," sighed Brenda, half yawning, half dewy-eyed. "That is, if he would fall in love with me back! He does deserve such a good wife!"

And then she laughed at her vanity, and fell asleep, to dream of Doctor Gerstler, who appeared in her visions to be a little, sawed-off scientific person clad in a butcher's apron.

When she met him, as she did within a few days, she perceived that her dreams were not prophetic. Doctor Gerstler was tall and broad—taller than Peter; and instead of slouching along with his head forward and his shoulders drooping, like Peter, he strode along like a particularly graceful German soldier. Blond was his hair, blond his pointed beard—he looked like a viking rather than a scientist. He had agreeably vikinglike eyes, too—glances that promised force and fire, and that warmed the cool blood in young ladies' veins. Brenda felt invigorated, thrilled by him.

And the fairy story began to enact itself before the benignly approving eyes of all Old Salesport. Never had anything more appropriate been seen, said the town. They were both so good to look upon; they were both so "vital"—vital was a word just coming into general use as a substitute for "vigorous" in Salesport circles, which means that it was falling into desuetude in the more swiftly moving centers of linguistic fashion. He had money as well as she; if his ancestry could not quite match the Armitages—the Gerstlers having come over only forty years ago!—Old Salesport felt convinced that his posterity would be distinguished enough to

compensate. So Old Salesport purred and smiled and gave its benediction.

And Brenda, stirred, amused, caught up in a current with which she was rather inclined to think that she wished to drift, waited for the moment when all the slumberous feeling in her should not merely move drowsily, but wake to palpitant life; waited the blazing torch that would kindle her and would light the fires of another hearth.

There was no question as to the ardor and the charm with which Doctor Gerstler infused his wooing. The autumn days drifted by—nay, rather, they flew by—on rainbow-colored wings. Brenda was moved by pride as well as by subtler, softer feelings. There was no doubt that this young man was to be a "big" man in his profession; he had determined that, and she gathered that whatever he had hitherto set his heart upon he had won. Distinction was to be his—the glorious distinction of high service to humanity.

"I used to think that that would be enough for me," he told her. "I used to think that I should regard that as achievement in itself. I never imagined the time would come when I should think of it chiefly as a nosegay to place in a woman's hand."

His eyes, brilliant, daring, compelling, said all the rest, and hers dropped. She felt the mounting glow of pride, the tremor of passion in response to his, so evident in his glances, in the deep tones of his voice. And yet—

And yet it was not with a full heart that she gave him the promise he sought, when, by and by, she gave it. The courtship had been brief. It was only November when their engagement was announced. And she was happy—glad and proud and happy. She told herself many times in the day how glad and proud and happy she was; and marvelled that she should think it necessary to reassure herself upon a point so patent.

When Peter congratulated her, she was conscious of her first strange, unaccountable little misgiving. She herself had written him:

DEAR PETER: Will you come up and let me thank you for introducing Louis to me? In a day or two all the world will know what happiness you have brought me, but I want you to know it first of all—dear, kind, old Peter, who has always done me kindnesses from the time when he used to keep the bad dogs and the bad boys away. I know how you will rejoice in our happiness. Always your affectionate

BRENDA.

And Peter had come, with his kind, twisted smile, and his amused, wise eyes, and had told her that she was a very nice little girl indeed, and that he was glad of her happiness and that there wasn't a better fellow living than Gerstler. And yet, when afterward she watched him disappear under the hedge, and pictured him trudging on to the brown, tumble-down cottage that might have been the Armitage lodge except that it looked too unkempt for such a position in the world, there was a little, lurking melancholy in her heart.

It passed, of course, when her all-conquering sun god arrived. He had some new trophy to lay at her feet that day—some invitation to write for a medical review his discoveries about the island fever or the industrial diseases of the leather business; or a request from a medical school to address it upon some obscure matter; or an appointment to some congress of grave discussion. And he assured her, with many indications that he was speaking what he believed, that it was for the purpose of laying his laurels in her lap that he prized them.

"But what laurels do I bring to you?" she had questioned, holding him away from her and looking, half amused, half wistful, into his eyes.

He told her how incomparably beautiful and how incomparably wonderful she was, and how her condescension in stooping to love him was the miracle

of the ages. It was pretty talk, but it left Brenda unconvinced.

"No, but I'm serious," she said. "As for looks, we both know perfectly well that there are a cool million or so of women who are at least my equals in that respect; and so for character and for charm. And you, my dear Louis—though I hate to flatter you—you bring quite as much in those lines to the wedding as I do. What do I do to balance these little laurels which you are so good as to lay in my lap, as you say?"

He was a trifle puzzled, and was even more bewildered when she seemed to find insufficient his reply to the effect that she gave enough in giving her love. But they did not waste too much time in psychologizing. And he never arrived at the core of her objection—an obscure and ill-defined one, even in her own mind—to the theory that a fine man may purchase the love of a high-minded woman by offerings of renown and of service, as another may purchase the love of a smaller creature by other, more tangible offerings.

One night, while Louis was away from Old Salesport upon one of his ornamental errands, Peter wandered up to the big house, with Mutt, as usual, at his heels. Brenda wished to discuss with him the nature and attributes of love; she had always been used to discussing with him what she pleased. But Peter was gruffly uncommunicative. He preferred to talk about the presidential campaign just passed, and the intelligence of his dog, and the dullness of Brenda's Angora, and the rehearsals for the Christmas theatricals of the girls' club.

"Peter, dear, why be tiresome?" asked Brenda. "I'm placing before you, in your well-known character of newspaper editor and proprietor, a question of fundamental interest. What does woman want in love? Now, don't try to sidetrack me onto the likelihood of tariff revision!"



And yet it was not with a full heart that she gave him the promise he sought.

"How should I know what a woman wants in love?" demanded Peter impatiently. He steadfastly refused to look at Brenda. He pulled the dog's ears and he stroked the cat's fur—they were excellent friends now; he stirred the logs on the hearth. "What in Heaven's name should I know about it? She wants love, I suppose, and satisfaction, and the chance to be proud of her mate. What else?"

"Something else," said Brenda rather sadly. "But I don't know what it is. But why do you say you know nothing about it, Peter? Surely you, with your big heart—surely you know something about loving a woman."

She said it with a sense of daring. A happily engaged girl takes so many liberties that no other would venture. Peter raised his eyes and looked at her harshly, miserably. Brenda shrank

back. She had thought she knew every expression on old Peter's face. But it seemed she had been mistaken. This was a new one.

"Oh, Peter!" she murmured. "I—I—didn't—dream——"

"Didn't dream what?" snarled Peter roughly. "You surely didn't think I had come to thirty-five years without ever being singled, did you?"

"I—I don't know what I really thought," faltered Brenda. A second ago she had been sure his miserable eyes confessed hungry, hopeless love for her; now she did not know what his rough voice denoted. She seemed to be somehow out of it.

"Well, don't bother to think anything about it," said Peter, resuming his normal manner and tone. "I made my disastrous little experiment when—oh, when you were in short skirts. And I'm profoundly ignorant of what a woman wants in love. To be sure of her man, never to be ashamed of him, to know him her equal—some such things, I suppose she wants. Not to be the one to give in disproportion——"

"Something else," Brenda persisted. "But I don't know what it is."

"Then nobody does," replied Peter gallantly. And before long he took his leave of her, with eyes resolutely calm and indifferent to the wistfulness of her gaze.

When Louis came back, she could not refrain from asking him if he knew anything about Peter's emotional history. Louis laughed, the full-lunged, contented laugh of a man whose own emotions have not brought him to shipwreck on a stormy coast, and who finds the customary masculine amusement in the sight of a man who has not been so fortunate or so wise.

"Peter was near to being disastrously chivalric when he was a sophomore at Harvard," he told her. "You know the dear fellow needs a guardian"—he was always careful to express affection in

equal terms with contempt for Peter—"and he needed one particularly that winter. There was a girl— Oh, Peter got rather badly involved with the wrong kind of young person. And he insisted upon regarding himself as entirely blameworthy—he wasn't, of course. The woman was the active agent in the—er—affair; older than Peter in years as well as in experience. But— Oh, well, when she whined, he was all for marrying her; and the only thing that prevented his exculpatory nuptials with a person whom your staid Salesport would not have received was the fact that she turned out to have a husband living, whom she had neglected to divorce before embarking on other amatory adventures. Poor old Peter!"

Brenda's dark eyes were deep pools of pain and pity. "Poor, poor boy!" she said.

"But a quixotic simpleton, you admit, my darling?" questioned Louis quickly, bending over her. She lifted her face toward his kiss, but absently, her eyes still dark with the vision of folly and sin and sacrifice which her lover's laughing words had opened to her. "See here, Brenda mine," Louis went on, as she did not answer him in words, "Peter is, of course, all right, and we're both very devoted to him, and all that. But need he be so constantly underfoot?"

Brenda withdrew from the arm that encircled her.

"Why, Louis!" she cried. And again: "Why, Louis!"

"Oh, I admit I'm a jealous bear! I grudge every look, every thought, you bestow on any other man! I confess it. Of course one doesn't regard good old Peter as a possible rival"—he laughed with a careful infusion of contempt in his amusement—"but—I don't want you to think of any one but me."

And again Brenda's only response was a dazed: "Why, Louis!"

And that night she found herself seri-

ously pondering the thesis: "Are successes made of coarser fiber than failures?" But vaguely dissatisfied with herself and with life though she was, she went on with the preparations for her wedding.

She was coming down from a fitting in Boston one afternoon just before Christmas. One of the original members of her girls' club was on the train—a young woman who had graduated from a position in the mills to a stenographer's place in Boston, and she sat and talked with Brenda. They exchanged reminiscences of the foundation of the club, and Brenda asked news of some of the girls whom she had not seen since her return to Salesport.

"That pretty little Cassie Blair, what's become of her?" she asked.

Her fellow traveler looked embarrassed. She stumbled and stuttered.

"Why, Mabel, what is it? Surely you can tell me!"

Well, it seemed that Mabel could, eventually, tell Brenda the story of pretty little Cassie Blair. And the story ended with:

"And she just won't say a single thing about who it was, Miss Armitage. She won't! She says she's able to take care of herself and to get her own revenge on him, and that she wouldn't want to marry him, anyhow! And so nobody knows a thing—though, of course, there's some guessing. She didn't have any own folks, you know—just a stepfather, and he's cast her off. It's the old club girls who are—sort of seeing her through."

"I'll do that myself!" cried Brenda warmly.

"She'll never in the world let you, Miss Armitage. She's just as set and stubborn as if she hadn't a thing to be ashamed of—more so, I really do think. She'll never let you do a thing for her. You're too far off—such things could never happen to you, you know; while as for the rest of us, why, they might

—or Cassie thinks they might. And so——"

"Well, you act as my agent, if that will spare her feelings," suggested Brenda. "When will her baby be born?"

"Oh, Miss Armitage, isn't it awful? Some time near Christmas."

"Poor Cassie!" sighed Brenda.

She tried to shake off the depression of the ugly, miserable little story, so commonplace, so brutal, after she had put Mabel down at her house near the mills and was going on herself in the padded comfort of her car to her own dignified dwelling. And so busy were the last few days before Christmas with engagement festivities and rehearsals for the club theatricals and last-minute presents that she did manage to relegate it to the back of her mind. And so it was with a sense of shock that she heard from Louis Gerstler the further history of the affair two or three days before Christmas.

It was at Mrs. Warriner's dance at the club for her college sons and daughters and their Christmas guests, and Brenda had been having a very gay time, enjoying to the full the callow homage of the youngsters. Louis was busy and was not to come in until late, but his absence was in a vague way a relief; Louis was a rather terrifyingly direct—male, she supposed, was the word—in his manifestations of proprietorship, and he would have curtailed her dances with the youngsters. Of course, she liked to dance with Louis better than with any one else, he was such an admirable dancer—but—well, she didn't quite know why, but she rather hated that "possessed" sensation he gave her.

By and by he came, and his brilliant eyes seized her and held her and embraced her before all the crowded ballroom. The young college girls told one another what an ideal match it was—both so handsome, so glowing, so alive!



Louis Gerstler read it, frowning. "Very pretty, Waring, and doubtless a well-deserved tribute."

And after he had danced a few minutes with her, he said: "Come into the conservatory. I've something to tell you."

The conservatory was the piazza, glass-inclosed and palm-filled; through its crystal wall one caught glimpses of the snowy country. A white moon sailed high. The winter night, with its austerity, its loneliness, seen in sharp contrast to the pretty, noisy, frivolous dancing room, stirred a deep emotion in Brenda's heart. She leaned close against her lover for an instant; she wanted to feel the assurance of warm, infolding love, of kindness, in the great, white, wide, empty world. But to Louis the instinctive movement was the signal for a passionate outbreak from

which she drew back a little wearied. He marked the swift change. He adapted himself to her mood as quickly as he was aware of it.

"I brought you out to tell you about Peter," he said rather gravely.

"Peter?" Her voice was anxious. Of course, Peter was not at the dance—Peter didn't do anything so social as dancing.

"Yes, old Peter is in trouble, I'm afraid." He paused. There was a strained impatience in Brenda's: "Yes, yes. What is it?"

"I hate to have to mention the ugly thing to you—but last week I happened to be the only available doctor one night when—a mill girl who had been a fool

paid the penalty of her foolishness. Of course, it would have been a good thing if the child had died—if they had both died, for that matter! But a physician is not a social philosopher. They both lived. And I've just been called in by Peter. The baby was left at his door in a basket this evening. He sent for me to attend it—it had been chilled before it was found."

He came to a stop. Brenda stood looking at him out of wide, bewildered eyes. She could not think of anything to say for a second, and before she broke the silence, he went on again:

"The girl had steadfastly refused to make known the name of the man responsible for her ruin. She had said that she could be revenged on him without any interference from without. Well——" He shrugged his shoulders.

Brenda stared at him for a moment before his meaning penetrated to her mind. Then she laughed—actually laughed.

"You mean to insinuate that Peter——" she said, and laughed again, a ringing, scornful laugh. Louis was nettled.

"My dear girl," he said sharply, the vague, unfounded jealousy of his whole courtship suddenly harsh in his voice, "it's scarcely a matter for insinuations. The girl left the child at Peter's doorstep."

"My dear Louis," said Brenda firmly, "not you, not Cassie Blair—it was Cassie Blair, of course?—not Peter himself could make me think such a thing for a minute. I know Peter."

"Not quite as a man knows Peter," he replied evenly, though he was pale with anger. "You recall I told you of Peter's earlier—er—indis——"

"You told me," she flashed back at him, "of poor, dear, silly Peter's entire willingness to right a wrong he hadn't really been guilty of! Will you come with me? I'm going down to Peter's."

He forbade her going. She laughed insolently.

"Why do you talk medieval nonsense to me?" she demanded. "I'm going. Are you coming with me?"

Sullenly he went.

The little brown cottage was alight, though it was midnight. Peter himself opened the door to them. He was smoking his old pipe. Mutt, the beloved possession of the man who had "gone away," followed close at his heels, prepared to growl at any unwelcome intruders. He wagged his stub of a tail when he saw the resplendent Brenda, however.

"Why, Brenda! Why—Gerstler! Come in! This is a surprise. It—seems to be responding nicely to your treatment, Gerstler. Come in! It's breathing normally and sleeping—beautifully, Mrs. Dock says. You've heard of my Christmas gift, Brenda?"

They were in the shabby, shabby sitting room now.

"Oh, Peter, please don't call it 'it'!" cried Brenda, breaking into hysterical laughter.

"But I don't know what else to call it. It's a nice little thing. Which sort is it, Gerstler?"

"It's a boy," replied Gerstler shortly.

Mrs. Dock came patter in. She called herself Peter's housekeeper, but she looked like a lineal descendant of the Dickens charwoman. She held a piece of paper in her hand.

"Oh, excuse me, sir. I didn't know you had company. But this was on the other side of the skimpy little quilt that was pinned about the baby."

She extended the paper and Peter took it absently. Brenda was watching him with glowing eyes.

"Peter, why didn't you send at once for the police?" she asked.

He had begun to unfold the note, but he stopped to look at her in surprise.

"Well, you know," he said, "a physician seemed to me much more of a ne-

cessity than the police. What did I want with the police?"

"They're customary in the case of foundlings," she told him steadily. She had a deep dimple at one corner of her ripe, full lips, and it was in evidence now, as she smiled—smiled with the strangest expression Louis Gerstler had ever seen on her face—pleasure, affection, pride, and deep, tender, maternal amusement.

"Well, I didn't want 'em," answered Peter. "I'll keep the little tike until its mother comes to her senses and wants him back."

"You?" Brenda scoffed tenderly. "What do you know about keeping babies? And what makes you suppose the mother will ever come to her senses? Picture yourself saddled with that baby for life!"

"My dear fellow," broke in Louis, in his authoritative manner, "consider your own position. Here a—er—wronged woman leaves a baby at your doorstep. Don't you see what, unless you take the customary steps at once, people are going to say?"

Again Peter's fingers paused in the task of unrolling the note. "I don't think I get you, Gerstler," he answered, and he seemed to straighten as he spoke.

"Oh, yes, I think you do! You owe it to yourself to make it clear at once that the child has not a thread of claim upon you."

"Oh, the devil! I beg your pardon, Brenda. But you make me tired, Gerstler! What do you suppose I care for the opinion of any one capable of forming such a judgment as that? No one who knows me——" Then he broke off and looked at Brenda with sudden fright in his eyes.

"No one who knows you could possibly believe anything—ridiculous, such as Louis tries to imply, Peter," she reassured him.

"Thank you," he said.

They looked at each other as if Louis Gerstler had not been there. Then Peter read the note. He handed it to Brenda.

"It's a silly thing," he said. "But—after what Gerstler has—implied—perhaps you'd both better look at it."

It was written on a sheet of blue-ruled paper, highly glazed, with two clasped hands holding a bunch of flowers as decoration.

DEAR MR. WARING, it is an awful thing for me to do to leave my baby with you, but there is not any one else in salesport I could trust. You never turned anything away yet—I've always heard it said and I seen it was so myself with the dog mutt. I am going away and I leave my baby with you O please please mr waring don't send it to no asylum kill it if you can't see your way to keep it. I'd of killed it if I could but it had such little, curled-up fingers. Please mr. waring you are the kindest man in Salesport it is well known and I leave my baby to you.

CASSIE BLAIR.

Brenda was crying as she passed the piece of paper across to Louis Gerstler. He read it, frowning.

"Very pretty, Waring, and doubtless a well-deserved tribute. But if you don't turn that child over to the proper authorities, your doorstep will never again be safe from baskets of similar offerings."

"Peter, give me that baby!" cried Brenda. "You don't know the first thing about children, and your Mrs. Dock would give them paregoric and sugar bags, I'm sure. And there's a lot of truth in what Louis says—people would think they could impose on you forever! Now, no one will ever think that about me—about us——" She included her affianced with a look. He sprang to his feet, his handsome face flushed with anger.

"Brenda, have you taken leave of your senses? Do you think for a moment that I shall permit you to—smirch yourself by meddling in this affair? Do you think I will allow you to care for that nameless waif?"

"I was going to adopt it," answered Brenda. "I was going to give it"—she looked at him proudly—"the name of Armitage!"

"And you planned, perhaps, to bring it up in company with your own children, with mine? Are you insane?"

"There's no need of all this sound and fury, Gerstler," interrupted Peter. "If the poor girl doesn't come back for her baby, I'll bring him up myself. I couldn't let Brenda, for all her generosity—all her dear generosity," he added almost as if speaking to himself, "burden herself with my—my extravagances. I'll keep the little fellow."

"Peter, Peter, dear! How you need some one to take care of you!" Brenda was laughing and crying and breathless, and there was still that look of tender, wise, maternal pride and amusement about her lips.

"Perhaps"—Louis sprang to his feet and spoke in a voice choked with rage, beside himself with a jealousy whose origin his mind groped vainly to discover even while it flayed all his spirit—"perhaps you feel that you had better be the one to take care of your unworldly 'dear Peter'?"

"Gerstler!" It was Peter seeking to bring the man to himself. But Brenda, with calm eyes, studied the angry face of her lover.

"Now that you mention it," she said, in a slow, silky voice, "I rather think that's the way I do feel about it!"

Thus it was that the rainbow-bound volume which the fairy-story lovers

of Salesport had been reading was abruptly slammed in their astonished and injured countenances. Thus it was that Doctor Louis Gerstler's sign disappeared overnight from the Main Street house in which no lesser dignity than a retired scientist had ever abode; thus it was that the study of the concomitant diseases of the leather industry in Salesport was made by some one else than the brilliant and all-conquering young man who had first essayed them.

Thus it was that Brenda learned what it was a woman desires in love, or, at any rate, what she desired in love—the deep heart of utter faith and the deep joy of service.

"He needs me so! He needs me so!" became the happy psalm in her heart.

She loved to manage, and she saw life stretching forward filled with never-ending opportunities for management. There would be dear, impractical Peter; there would be silly, most impractical little Cassie Blair and the villain of her story—Brenda felt gloriously competent to manage them. First Cassie should be put in a financial position to make her independent of the villain; then he should marry her, if Brenda herself had to play policeman for the ceremony. It was all nonsense, of course—as if the dear baby were not equally dear, whatever the circumstances of his coming to the world! That baby should always be the particular charge of Peter and herself—that dear baby who had given them to each other!

And again her heart sang hosannah: "He needs me so!"





PINK SLIPPERS

BY

FREDERICK M. SMITH

Author of "A Divertisement," "Between Dances," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. F. NONNAMAKER

IT was sunset time on the evening of carnival, and at the great winter hostelry at Port Antonio, Jamaica, some of the guests—spruce gentlemen in evening clothes and radiant ladies making a considerable display of white shoulders—strolled on the broad piazza waiting for the imminent dinner hour. The luminous peace of the tropic night was falling; a sky all washed gold tinted the blue arm of the bay; and slowly the green lace palm fringe and the line of white huts on the opposite shore merged into an indistinct blueness.

"It's going to be moonlight," said Peter Buxton. "It's a shame to waste a night like this dancing with people in black masks."

"I don't anticipate that we'll waste much of it," observed Sally Armstrong, to whom Peter was engaged. "We'll slip out for a stroll after the first dance or two."

"How shall I know you, by the way? There'll be a dozen black dominoes. Everybody's got 'em."

"A man should always be able to recognize the woman he loves even in disguise," said the provocative Sally.

"Oh, should he? Well, if the woman he loves wants to take the chance of his making love to somebody else!" said Peter airily.

In reply, Sally thrust forth a trim foot incased in pink dancing slippers. "For one thing, you can tell me by these and the pearl hearts embroidered on them. There are plenty of pink pumps, but pearl hearts like these are my own. I think you can manage to recognize them, don't you?"

"Guess so," said Peter confidently.

So when two hours later he entered the ballroom, garbed in the flowing, flowered robe of a mandarin and wearing an expressionless Chinese mask, he straightway set out on a search for

Sally's pink, pearl-embroidered slippers. Dominoes of various colors circled past him in the arms of Pierrots, Moors, or cavaliers. There were also a Chinaman or two; but he paid little attention to these, for it was his business to find Sally, and not Sally's to find him.

He spied her presently, snug in a quiet corner, a black mask covering her face to the bow of her red lips, one pink slipper thrust boldly forth from the folds of her domino. Bowing very low, he laughed to himself behind his mask; for he was in love with Sally, and in a moment they were going to be alone under a tropic moon.

She shook her fan at him, and, rising, cuddled a small, gloved hand into the crook of his elbow.

"Outside?" he whispered.

The pressure of her fingers on his arm was an affirmation.

On the broad piazzà they paused for a moment at the railing. Below them the bay shone like liquid silver in the moonlight, and above it the low Jamaican sky made a canopy of blue-white. The air was sweet as with the warm perfume of smothered flowers. Altogether it was a night that called to lovers, and with one mind the two on the piazza descended and moved off along the graveled walk that led into the shrubbery. The instant distance and shadows warranted it, Peter ventured to slip an arm about his companion for one little proprietary embrace. With a satisfied sigh, she yielded to him. The thing was intoxicating. He pulled off his interfering mask and, taking her suddenly in his arms, kissed the mouth below her loup. Her manner of returning the kiss was all that a lover could have desired as, with a free hand, she disengaged her own mask.

"Sweetness!" she murmured; and then: "Gracious powers!"

Peter jumped as if he had touched a live wire. First, because "Sweetness," as a term for him, was not in

Sally's love lexicon. Second, because the woman wasn't Sally at all! Even there it was light enough to distinguish features, and he was properly shocked to discover that he had kissed a young woman whom he knew only by sight. Moreover, she seemed very much disturbed at the contretemps, and her extreme perturbation rattled him. Instead of giving him an opportunity to explain, she snatched up the skirts of her domino and bolted like a guilty thing. He saw her pause to readjust her mask; then he followed slowly. One question occupied him: Whom had she expected? He whistled doubtfully. He recalled a poem of Kipling's called "Pink Dominoes."

The tantalizing strains of a hesitation waltz came to him as he approached the hotel. Standing in the doorway at the edge of the iridescent whirlpool of dancers, he stared at the feet of the women as they floated past. Beneath the hems of their dominoes their dancing slippers resembled white and blue and pink and scarlet flower petals drifting and driven by a rhythmical wind. There were plenty of pink slippers, and finally he thought he identified a pair of pearl-embroidered ones dancing with a Moor. Were they Sally's, or had the other woman got back and discovered her real partner?

He waited till the music ceased, and, making straight for that part of the crowd where the slippers had disappeared, he was thrilled to see them moving uncertainly in his direction.

They paused near him hesitantly.

"Sally!" he hissed.

"Is that you?" came back the illuminating query; and, without waiting his reply, she gripped his arm with a white, ungloved hand that he identified at once.

"Ohoo!" she panted. "I've just had an adventure."

Peter started.

"It seems to be an open season for

Chinamen, and somebody else is wearing pearl - embroidered pumps."

Peter chuckled behind his mask; he scented a mystery.

"About ten minutes ago a big Chinaman came up to me as I was walking across the room. Of course I supposed it was you." She pushed Peter off at arm's length and examined him critically. "His robe was just like yours," she said, "and the mask was near enough to mistake. He took my arm and started me across the room. But just as we got to the door he said, in a very deep voice: 'Shall we go down to the shore, or out in the machine?'"

"Did you know his voice?" questioned Peter.

"I knew it wasn't your voice; and I stopped and said: 'Oh, I thought you were somebody else.' And he said something under his breath that sounded like 'Damn!' and dropped my arm as if it were hot, and begged my pardon, and shot off."

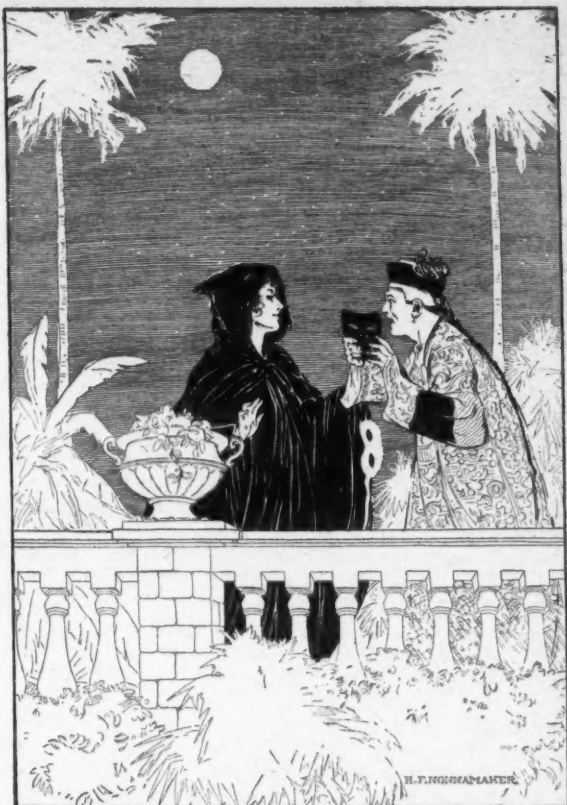
"By ginger!" said Peter, as the situation unfolded itself. "By ginger! That will have been the man?"

"What man?"

"I also had an adventure."

Sally started in her turn. "It was with pink slippers!" she crowed. "I know it. Wasn't it?"

"I thought they were yours, and she



Peter jumped as if he had touched a live wire.

had just your figure; so I appropriated her. She seemed expecting to be appropriated." He laughed. "We didn't say anything. She seemed to take it for granted that we were going out under the moon. So we got 'way down the walk there among the palm trees."

"Oh!" said Sally, in a tone of wonderment that held a nuance of disapproval.

Peter glanced at the eyeholes in the velvet mask, imagined the snap of the blue eyes behind them, and weakly decided to trim his sails.

"I took off my mask," he said slowly,

"and I—I was just going to kiss her; but she undid her loup, and we both saw that we weren't who we thought we were. That is——"

"I understand," said Sally quickly. "And then?"

"She ran like the conventional frightened deer. But," he added, sinking his voice to mysteries, "I recognized her."

"Peter!" said Sally, fairly teetering in her suspense.

"It was young Mrs. van Sitten."

"Mrs. van——" Sally's voice faded quite away in her astonishment.

"Yes."

"The Providence woman who came here a week ago?"

"Um!" said Peter.

"And her husband is at least thirty years older than she is," said Sally solemnly.

"Is he?" said the startled Peter.

"Peter, the man I saw was looking for her."

"It requires no great perspicacity to see that," said he.

Sally sniffed like an old lady scenting scandal. "And I *know* it wasn't her husband," said she positively. "You say she was ready to kiss you?"

"Are you sure it wasn't her husband?" said the wily Peter.

"I'd bet," said Sally, "I'd bet my month's allowance. It's a nice state of affairs," she added virtuously.

"Well, not our affair," said her fiancé easily.

The young woman paused on this, and thought deeply.

"I'd give a good deal to know who the man was," she admitted.

Peter had a faint curiosity on his own account, but didn't say so.

"I never liked her looks from the first," said Sally. "The idea of her carrying on a flirtation under a doting husband's nose!"

"We don't know beyond peradventure that it wasn't her husband," he

objected, in a gallant attempt to be fair to the frail Mrs. van Sitten.

"Peradventure nonsense!" said the lady. "You know very well it wasn't. He squeezed my arm most affectionately, as we crossed the room."

"Well, I don't see——"

"Peter, I'm going to find out who that man was."

Peter scratched his Chinese nose. "But how shall we find out? There are four Chinamen that I know of, and maybe more."

"Ah," said the canny Sally, "but I could tell this one! His mask had a little nick on one side of the chin, and the gold braid on his right sleeve was torn for about an inch. Besides—— Why, of course!"

"What?"

"He'll be with the woman in pearl-embroidered slippers, part of the time at least."

"You reason like a detective in a novel. But suppose we do find him?"

"I never saw such a stiff-necked youth. There'll be some way to find out who he is. You could run against him and knock his mask off."

"I could," said Peter, "but I don't intend to."

"Then we can be round at midnight when they unmask. That's what we'll do. It's our duty to know the truth about that woman."

"It would be better to preserve our faith in humanity."

"My faith in humanity will be stronger if I know what humans I cannot put faith in," said Sally dryly. "Come along! You look for pink slippers."

"I'll bet they've already escaped to the motor or the timber," said Peter.

"I've an idea!" said Sally. "We can get somebody else to help."

"Who?"

"There's Archie Winter over there in a sailor's costume."

"How do you know?" demanded her fiancé jealously.

"He told me he was going as a sailor with a red handkerchief at his neck."

"Oh, did he?" said Peter sourly. For Archie Winter was a young man who had refused to see that a ring on the third finger of the left hand debars a young lady from ardent masculine attention. Wherefore, Peter disliked him.

"We can tell him to be on the lookout at midnight——"

"We will do nothing of the sort," said Mr. Buxton, in a tone that Sally recognized as final.

"Well, there's father," she said, pointing to an expansive white waistcoat on a plutocrat who was looking in at the door. "Come along! I'll fix him."

"Father," she whispered to that gentleman, as the pair paused before him.

"Hello! Is that you?"

"Listen! We want you to do something. Do you see Peter?"

"I see a particularly unattractive Oriental," said Mr. Armstrong.

"Well, we want you to keep your eye out for a Chinaman that's as like Peter as two peas."

"As one pea," corrected Peter.

"As one pea is like another. If you are near him at midnight, you must watch when he unmask, and be sure to see who he is."

"But why—what——"

"Never mind now. You do it. We're in a hurry."

"All right," grumbled her parent. "If I'm near him," he added, mentally resolving that he wouldn't worry about trying to be.

As a matter of fact, they did not have to depend on father. For after a stroll in the moonlight, during which they were almost diverted from their quest, they again returned to the dancing; and at a moment when they were drifting lazily about the circle, Sally suddenly

stiffened, gripped her partner's arm fiercely, and hissed between her teeth: "There they are—there!"

Peter beheld pink slippers lolling through the waltz in the clutches of a tall Chinaman; and by all the evidence that he had they were the same slippers that had fled from him so precipitately. His curiosity flamed anew.

"That's her!" he cried excitedly, casting discretion and grammar to the winds.

For the remainder of the evening they literally dogged the footsteps of the man with a nick in his chin. Now and again the provoking couple would disappear; now the Chinaman would leave the pink slippers as if to prevent his attentions from becoming too obvious; but always they seemed to drift together again after a short interval.

The fateful hour of midnight approached. The conservators of virtue grew more and more agitated. The mandarin with the nick in his chin and the pink slippers were again waltzing together.

"I had no idea they'd stay together when they unmasked," said Sally dubiously.

Peter laughed. "It'd be a good joke on us if it were her husband, after all!"

"You don't suppose it can be?"

The music stopped, with a long, passionate sob. The cavalier who was acting as master of ceremonies announced loudly: "At the stroke of midnight all the dancers will unmask."

The man with the triangle began to beat out twelve. The big Chinaman was removing the mask with the nick in his chin.

"Ah!" said Sally, with a long intake of the breath.

The Chinaman was *not* Mr. van Sitten. But she did not know him. He was a young man, a very young man, of twenty-two or so, an age too suspiciously in agreement with that of the



"Sally!" he hissed. "Is that you?" came back the illuminating query.

youthful Mrs. van Sitten. Sally successfully uncovered an evildoer.
thrilled with the joy of one who has Mrs. van Sitten was discovered.

The latter was slowly unfastening her loup. As it dropped, she shot a single glance in their direction, then turned to her companion with a shrug.

It was Sally's turn to start. "But Peter!" complained she, in a whisper that ended in a positive wail.

"Uh-huh!" said the confounded Peter.

"Is *that* the woman you saw?"

"I was sure," began Peter apologetically.

"That's *not* Mrs. van Sitten."

Peter rubbed his own nose thoughtfully. The moment was catastrophic.

"In the dark, I suppose I might have made a mistake, but——"

Sally stamped a pink slipper.

"In the dark anybody might be mistaken," growled Peter defensively. "She looks very like Mrs. van Sitten, one way you take it."

"Why were you so positive? Here we've been making geese of ourselves all the evening." She halted. "I wonder if we could have made a mistake in this person? Perhaps it isn't the woman you had," she added, grasping at a last straw.

She did not finish; the couple they had shadowed, after conversing for a moment, turned and came toward them. Then it dawned on Sally that while she and Peter had been following the pink slippers and the mandarin, the pink slippers and the mandarin had been equally curious about them.

The gentleman swept them a bow. It was the young woman who spoke.

"I am sure you are the ones we got mixed up with, aren't you?"

Peter flushed and Sally smiled. "Our slippers are quite alike, even to the trimmings."

"A contretemps!" said the lady.

"Not for you, sir," said the man, with a meaning laugh toward Peter.

The lady flushed, then she, too, laughed. Leaning toward Sally, she

said, with the suspicion of a flicker of the eyelid in Peter's direction: "But we'll keep your secret, if it is a secret. It's a good thing my husband isn't jealous, or he might have misunderstood that kiss. Au revoir." And to the accompaniment of her own soft laughter they departed.

"A fine wild-geese chase!" said Sally, as they walked out under the moon. "So you did kiss her?" she queried sweetly.

"I thought she was you, of course," explained Peter hastily, "and then I thought you'd misunderstand——"

"That I'd be jealous?"

"No, but——"

"No, but!" mocked Sally, to his infinite relief caroling like a lark in the springtime. "You poor boy!" she went on, finding his fingers affectionately. "I'm not such a goose. Don't you know me yet? Let this be a lesson to you. Always tell your wife the whole truth."

"And, furthermore," continued Sally severely, "it'll teach you not to be so positive the next time you have to identify people in the dark."

"And let it be a lesson to you!" said the harassed Peter, in sudden emulation of the trodden worm. "Let it teach you not to think evil of others without the best evidence in the world. All this pother about Mrs. van Sitten and her shocking ways! Doubtless she's an exemplary wife, dutifully in love with her aged husband."

"I certainly hope so," said Sally, in a self-righteous tone. After a moment's silence she added placatingly: "I'm glad I'm going to marry a young man. We can learn *our* lessons together, can't we?" And then—they were in a very dark and secluded corner of the piazza—she lifted a flushed and pleading countenance to her lover. "Kiss me," she said.

"Doing Good"

By Hildegarde Lavender

Author of "The Rest Farm," "For the Rainy Day," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

HOW is that wonderful club of yours getting on?" I asked Jocasta, as I lounged among the yellow cushions of her studio and watched her abstractedly preparing to brew tea. "That fine and final flower of democracy?"

Jocasta placed the caddy—a Dutch-silver trifle whose value is enhanced to her because she cherishes the belief that she was "almost caught" smuggling it in—back upon the tea table without having transferred any of its contents to the teapot. She looked at me with an expression at once hostile and expansive. She made a gesture of repudiation with her hands, and she said, in the familiar tone of the person whose flow of eloquence nothing can stop:

"That club! Don't *speak* of it!"

At that invitation to question, I said, of course: "Why, what's the matter with the club? I thought it was to be——"

"It *was*!" Jocasta interrupted me with more italics. "Oh, it was, it was! It was going to be the finest thing in women's clubs—or in men's, for that matter—that this town had ever seen. It was to give the lie for all time to that ancient canard about women—that they're not truly clubbable, you know. It was to be so pretty, and so gay, and so companionable, and so democratic. By democratic I do not mean," she elucidated haughtily, "that it was to be easy-going in its requirements for admission, but that, once admitted, there

was to be no difference at all among members—that Cecilia Beaux, if she joined, would be no more of a personage than little Alice Jones studying at the league, provided she got in; that Mrs. Cræsus, alighting from one of her twenty-seven French motor cars, would be no different, once the club door had closed upon her, than Polly Penniless who had had to walk to the said door because she didn't have a nickel to squander in trolley-car riding. Oh, it was to have been such a splendid club!"

Jocasta reached out vaguely toward the steaming kettle, looking so forlorn that it seemed almost unkind to remind her that one of the necessary ingredients of tea is tea leaf, and that she had not yet put any into the teapot.

"But why," I asked when the friendly hint had recalled her to her immediate business in life, "why do you speak of the club as something either stillborn or deceased? It was only a few days ago that I was reading about the speech some French futurist or other delivered there, and I am sure it was not more than a year since it opened its very handsome doors with the most elegant hospitality!"

"Oh, there's a club," admitted Jocasta slightly. "But it's not the club we planned at all. It has experienced the deadliest fate that can befall a club—it has been done good to. The most awful blighter of modern life has appeared within its halls—and worse, upon its governing board——"

"What on earth are you talking about?" I demanded, stirring the beverage which I had at last been fortunate enough to obtain, despite the influences working against that consummation in the mind of my hostess. "Who or what is the most awful blighter of modern times?"

"The most awful blighter of modern times," replied Jocasta, biting out her words vindictively, and using vulgar language, "is that busy face, the philanthropically-minded rich woman."

"Why, Jocasta!" I exclaimed weakly. In common with the other hundred million readers of the Sunday newspapers, I cherished a certain reverential attitude toward the rich woman with "the social conscience"; the rich woman who regarded her holdings "as a public trust"; the rich woman whose days were given over to all the multiform works of something currently described as "uplift." Was it possible that I—along with the other hundred million—had been admiring the wrong thing? Or was my friend merely crazy? So I stared at Jocasta, with the frown on her pretty forehead, the ire in her pretty eyes, and the smears of paint on the immensely becoming blue painter's apron she so often forgets to remove, and I repeated stupidly: "Why, Jocasta!"

"You remember," said Jocasta, eating little cakes with the self-forgetful manner of one occupied in important thinking, "the club as we planned it? There are so many women in this city interested in art—in painting, sculpture, illustrating, fine jewel work, and all that. Some of them are distin-

guished masters of their profession, some of them are wives of men who have made their mark in some branch of art, or who will make their mark, or who ought to make their mark! Some of them are critics, some of them are students, some of them are collectors. Anyway, there are plenty of women to form three or four such clubs as the single one we projected—a club that should support an attractive, very unpretentious meeting place, with one room suitable for exhibitions, with a reading room where all the art publications might be found, with a very simple kitchen, a very simple dining room, and a dressing room



"Oh, there's a club," admitted Jocasta slightly. "But it's not the club we planned at all."



"She said she had been thinking the whole thing over, and she felt we were not going at it in just the right way. We must build for the future."

where the out-of-town member might brush her hair and sew on her shoe buttons when she found herself in need of these restorative processes. Just a nice, decent, simply run woman's club, in short, with the membership confined to women whose interests were either professionally or sympathetically in art—could anything sound easier? Or more agreeable, really?

"Oh!" Jocasta suddenly exploded, "you needn't smile like that! I know what you're thinking—that stupid, antiquated slander about the jealousies within the artistic professions. It's all nonsense! There's no more jealousy in art than in any other business—in selling automobiles or in teaching the tango or in bricklaying. And, anyway, by admitting to membership persons of every shade of artistic belief, and all sorts of persons who were only extrinsically interested, so to speak, we were to prevent the friction that popular prejudice believes inevitable where two or three painters are gathered together."

"Well," I said, when Jocasta paused with a reminiscent frown, "what befell the club? I grant that it sounds agreeable as you sketch it."

"The dues," Jocasta went on, "were to be kept small. Beginning artists aren't apt to be rich, you know. Indeed, arrived artists have been known not to be in the Rockefeller class. One reason for the simplicity of everything was that the expenses might be kept down, so that no woman who really wanted to join, and who was really eligible for membership, might be excluded because of the money problem. So we were merely to take a floor in an old house, centrally located, or even in a new office building—it didn't matter where. The spirit was the one thing to count in this club—"

"But you took a whole house," I interrupted. "Such a lovely old place,

too! I had tea there once, before the Phi Sigma Epsilons gave it up—"

"It is a lovely house," admitted Jocasta gloomily. "There's a charming back piazza overhanging quite a decent little back-yard garden. Oh, yes, it's a lovely house, all right. I suppose you know something about rents for lovely old houses in the heart of New York? You know what a back-yard garden means? You have some idea of the cost of every dahlia and nasturtium raised there?"

I nodded. "But that's the advantage of a club," I pointed out. "A combination of women can afford so much more than one woman."

"In our case," contradicted Jocasta, "it is one woman who can afford so much more than a combination of women. The club, with the dues kept at the figure we had set, could never have afforded that house. But Mrs. X.— You know who Mrs. X. is?"

I admitted a knowledge of the lady. She is widely advertised as one of those who regarded their private fortunes merely as "a public trust."

"Mrs. X. had been interested in our project. Mrs. X.'s connection with the art life of New York is twofold. She has the finest private collection of paintings of the Barbizon school in this country, and she is so deeply interested in art, and is so very broad-minded, that she has actually allowed one of her sons to adopt the profession of painter—after he had failed at everything else! One can always trot out a dignified explanation for an art failure, you know! Well, she was one of the founders of our club—I forget whose bright little idea it was to secure her interest! It was secured, all right, but when we had reached the stage of beginning to look up floors, she had an inspiration. She came to a meeting fairly beaming all over her philanthropic face— You can't think how I hate the philanthropic face!"

"She's a very good-looking woman," I defended the countenance of the rich Mrs. X.

"She is. But she has a philanthropic face. And she brought it with her to one of our meetings. And she said she had been thinking the whole thing over, and she felt we were not going at it in just the right way. We must build for the future. We must remember that there would be lots of members to whom the club would be a sort of second home—students, women just beginning the practice of some branch of art—and that we must make the second home just as lovely, just as inspiring, as possible—a place to which their thoughts would turn, and their feet follow, for refreshment and beauty. As an art club, it was, moreover, our duty to set and maintain certain standards. For example, we couldn't countenance badly proportioned rooms, or a too squalid neighborhood; we must think not of ourselves alone; but of other members—of what it would mean to a refined, beauty-loving woman teaching drawing in a public school and boarding dingly in her school neighborhood, to have a perfectly lovely, restful, uplifting place to come to. Oh, yes, she did talk that kind of stuff, too," Jocasta interrupted her recital to reply to my interpolation. "They all do, those philanthropic rich."

"Well, why didn't you object then and there, if you didn't want the poor, overworked teacher to have a lovely place to which to retire?"

"I did object then and there. I pointed out to Mrs. X. and the rest of the board that we were organizing a club of social equals, and not a charity in any sense of the word. I pointed out, with all the eloquence of which I was capable, that the spirit of social equality, which is the prerequisite of a club as of a home, cannot flourish along with that parasitical growth—the spirit of philanthropy."

"And what did Mrs. X. say?" I asked.

"Mrs. X. very cleverly replied that I seemed to her to be confounding social and financial equality. In our present industrial civilization, she said, it seemed inevitable that certain persons should have more money than certain others; to what better use could the surplus of the richer ones be put than the smoothing down of inequalities? Why, for example, couldn't she, as a rich woman, be allowed to buy her way, so to speak, into an organization in which she was tremendously interested, but in which she would be of no particular use, by renting a house for the club?"

"And the answer to that was what?" I asked.

"The proper answer to that would have been that she could either come into the club as projected or stay out; that no one could buy her way in; and that no one could begin making it valuable presents in the spirit of charity. But that answer was not made. I tried to say the words, but people were treading on my toes and digging their elbows into my ribs and trying to persuade me to shut up, and I—shut. And Mrs. X. became the chairman of the house-hunting committee with practically unlimited authority—and that good-looking house is the result. One result, that is."

"What are the other results? You seem to imply disastrous ones."

"Well, Mrs. X., having guaranteed the rental of the house for five years, of course felt that she had done enough. She had justified her possession of millions! And there was the matter of furnishing. That house, which was to be so lovely and restful and inspiring to weary artists, needed considerably more chairs and rugs and tables and lamps and hangings and beds than the one floor in which not one thought of doing good to any one was ever to be allowed to intrude. How were we to get them? Oh, Mrs. Y. was

willing to come on the board and to help out in the furnishing expenses! Mrs. Y. used to do miniatures before she did one of old Y., the banker. So it was perfectly appropriate for her to belong to the club, you see. She gave a great part of the furniture. Miss Z. gave the lighting fixtures—she's the daughter of old Z., the steel man, and she paints holy horrors, and is dull as ditch water, but by way of lighting fixtures she got on the board. And there was a positive fever among the good ladies to make the club 'lovely' for a membership that was not expected to know how to make its quarters lovely for itself!

"And by that time the spirit of doing good was firmly established. They ran around, those rich women, who by that time were firmly persuaded that they owned the club and were the club, with that bland expression of busy kindness on their faces that disfigures so many modern countenances. They projected courses of lectures on Egyptian art and the period of mosaics, on French portraiture and the forgotten art of Spain or Timbaktu. They patronized and glowed and made the place unbearable to self-respecting souls!

"And, of course, the initiation fee simply had to go up—you have bigger lighting bills in a house than in four or five rooms, and you have furnace bills in a house, and you need more servants.



"They patronized and glowed and made the place unbearable to self-respecting souls!"

And the weary teacher of drawing and the poor, little beginning fashion illustrator have to dig down into their pockets to make up the running expenses. For naturally, the Ladies X., Y., and Z. feel that they've done all that can be expected of them. To do more would be pauperizing the club, my dear! And you know how prone to irresponsibility the artistic temperament is!" Jocasta mimicked the tones of her supposititious speakers with some acidity.

"Of course," she resumed, "lots of

people want to belong to the club, since it has a decent residence, that wouldn't have cared tuppence ha'penny about belonging to the club we planned. But they're the sort of people a self-respecting art club oughtn't to admit. And lots and lots of the people for whom it was planned don't belong at all—don't want to. Why should they want to pay more than they can afford to belong to an organization where a little group of rich women with pussy-cat grins of benevolence pervade the place and introduce their protégés in the guise of lecturers and have the walls hung with samples of their other protégés' paintings? Nobody with any self-respect at all, my dear, likes to be done good to. When you find a group of human beings willing to be done good to, you've found a fine group for excluding from any club to which you may happen to belong."

"The quality of mercy," I began ponderingly, but Jocasta leaped upon me, so to speak.

"I don't know anything about the quality of mercy," she declared vigorously, "but I can tell you this about the quality of benevolence—no, call it philanthropy, which is, after all, a different thing. It is twice cursed—it curses him who gives with the most obnoxious misapprehension of his own importance—especially if he is a she; and it curses her who takes with a meeching mealy-mouthedness that is disgusting to witness!"

"But you know," I protested feebly, "that is all wrong. You like to do kindnesses yourself. You've been taught from infancy that 'little acts of kindness, little deeds of love, make the earth a heaven like the one above'—or words to that effect. There's something wrong with your philosophy somewhere."

"I can't help it," replied Jocasta desperately. "I can't reason it out, but I have the conviction that the only kind-

ness which doesn't degrade the two parties to the transaction is that based upon mutual affection. I can take, without any compunction, from my parents all that they feel inclined to give me; I could give them all that I've got without any further consideration—there would be no taint of philanthropy in the affair. I can borrow from you without feeling mean, and I can lend to you without feeling myself a benefactor. In other words, kindnesses are possible among well-disposed equals—absolute equals. But they're poisonous and subtly corrupting among people who don't stand in the relation of equals in the transaction. Mesdames X. and Y. have no expectation of ever taking a house or house furnishings from the Art Club, and the Art Club doesn't expect them to drop in some day and ask for these or any other necessities of existence. So there you are. Confer a favor and lose the precious and necessary gift of self-humility; accept a favor and lose the precious gift of self-respect!"

"And what," I asked, depressed by Jocasta's finality of gloom, "is the answer to it all? Do you see no hope for the race—except to return to the cave, where there is neither favor nor giving in favor, only nuts and rabbit skins and a stick to drive off intruders?"

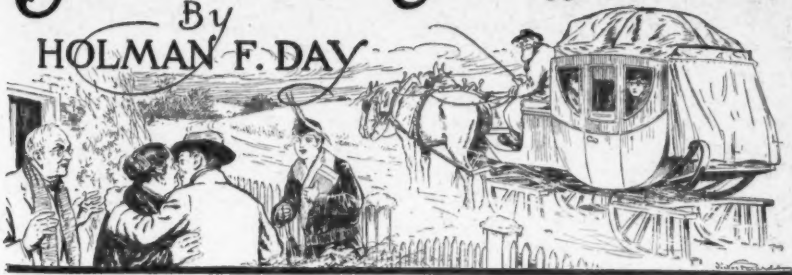
"I think," replied Jocasta, a little more hopefully, "that when they get their Binet tests and things down a little finer—a little more subtle, you know—we may be able to work out. For society could test its man or its woman, and could find out which ones were capable of accepting gifts without deteriorating into pulp. And which could bestow gifts without becoming quite unbearable. And then—"

"And then?" I repeated, as she paused.

"And then there'd be no more giving of gifts!" cried Jocasta, with conviction.

Santa with a Sheriff's Writ

By
HOLMAN F. DAY



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

AN iron Christmas," was what the wise old weather sharps predicted. They squinted shrewdly into the south where the snow banks ought to have been massing, and found only brassy emptiness in the sky, and declared that "Lord Bateman's mill wouldn't begin to grind its grist till 'long into Jinnywarry." And everybody in the real Christmas belt of the world feels that a Christmas without snow on the ground and snow lading the tree branches and snow sifting into the laughing faces of the folks isn't half a Christmas.

The rutted roads were hard and ringing, and wheels groaned over them, and they who were forced to ride journeyed with teeth on edge.

The iron-hard fields thrust up gray, stiff stubble against which the steel-cold winds thrummed harsh melodies.

A wintry aspect of that sort jangles folks' nerves, sets their tempers on edge, makes for gloom and discontent—for the true Christmastide in northern latitudes needs the soft upholstery of the snow to bring man into the true spirit of good will to all.

Sheriff Aaron Sproul was not amiable when he obeyed a summons and went down to Palermo. But the sum-

mons came from the Honorable Hosea Low, who had been a State senator and had influence in politics, and the Honorable Low said enough over the telephone to convince the sheriff that a ten-mile ride over the frozen roads into the fastnesses of Palermo was a bounden duty; furthermore, Mr. Low's own carriage was to convey him from the railroad over that ten miles.

The Honorable Low sent his man with the carriage, and the man explained apologetically that his master was "getting a little too pursy to ride over hard roads." The cap'n, bumping along, reflected indignantly that the old toad, so he termed the Honorable Low in his thoughts, didn't seem to care much whether somebody else had his teeth rattled out.

The supper that Mr. Low served in his big house on the hill, after his effusive and unctuous greeting of the sheriff, served to placate the jolted official considerably. The presence at the feast of the Honorable Low's pretty granddaughter, whose admiring awe of the high sheriff of her county was not disguised, helped to put Cap'n Sproul into a more equable frame of mind. And when he got nicely settled in the library and had begun to smoke one of

his host's fat cigars, he felt that a sheriff's lot was not altogether an unhappy one.

"I couldn't say so very much to you over the telephone about this affair," explained Mr. Low, stretching slippered feet to the blaze of the birch logs. "It's a farmers' telephone that runs out of this town, and the most of 'em pay their ten dollars a year for the assumed privilege of listening to every word that's said over it. From what I have heard about you, Sheriff Sproul, I take it that you feel about as I do in regard to what I may call the peasant class."

"Not knowing we had one, I ain't so sure about the state of my feelings," retorted the cap'n, glancing a bit sharply at his host.

"I mean ignorant and insulting men who go yapping at the heels of those who are better than themselves. In your high office you meet up with that sort, of course, and, having occupied high position myself, I have had very annoying experiences. I have always felt compelled to make an example of any man who has presumed to talk back to me."

Cap'n Sproul remembered certain instances of the sort in his own tempestuous life, but he did not offer comment. He did not relish Mr. Low's tone of conscious arrogance. He, himself, had never assumed that attitude toward mankind. He had never stood on a pinnacle and poked at humanity scornfully with a long stick. He had stood on a level and fought fairly.

The host caught the sheriff's quick glance and seemed to scent latent disagreement with his code.

"I'll come right down to the specific case in hand, so you won't misunderstand me, Mr. Sheriff," he hastened on. "I have called you down here because I need the highest official authority of the law in a crisis. I can't depend on the local deputy sheriff because he

comes from the lower classes himself. He is permeated with these local prejudices. I hold a bill of sale, bought from a third person, of all the personal property of one Sim Paine. I have advertised an auction of said property for to-morrow. Paine has intrenched himself in the midst of aforesaid property, is armed with a gun, and declares he will shoot to kill if he is molested. I have all the rights and the law on my side." Mr. Low began to grow a bit warm. In his warmth, he exposed a touch too much of his animus. "When I pay a third party a good bonus in order to get hold of a bill of sale, I propose to have my money back in spite of Sim Paine and his gun."

"Pretty valuable property, then, is it?" asked the sheriff. He examined the red coal of his cigar.

"It's old sculch—an ark of a stage-coach, harness, two spavined old horses," snorted Mr. Low.

"What be you—a collector of curiosities—paying a bonus for that kind of stuff?" asked the cap'n, a little curtly.

"I usually have a good reason for the things I do," returned the Honorable Low stiffly. "I expect you to be on hand at that auction to-morrow, Mr. Sheriff, and if old Sim Paine tries any of his gun tactics, I expect you to grab him and put him where he belongs—into State prison. I've got him, financially, where I want him. It would suit me perfectly if he got rammed a little farther. And it will make you popular in this town if you go ahead and ram him. He has been a devilish old nuisance all his life."

"I see the Christmas jollity is getting a good, early start in Palermo," commented the cap'n. "Nothing like real holiday spirit, is there?"

"Mr. Sheriff, as a patriotic citizen of this town, I protest against any sarcasm in this matter," declared Mr. Low, turning red. "You don't understand. Sim Paine was a nuisance when he went

to school here with us boys. He was low-lived, and he had the impudence to strike me because I made up some poetry about the patches on his pants. I was only amusing the girls, who looked down on him. He was a nuisance after he came back from the Civil War. He loafed around in the war four years, and was made a captain, and came back here and lorded around over us fellows who had stayed at home and worked hard at business to pay war taxes. Just to spite me, he turned the head of the young lady I had picked out for my own wife and married her—but she paid for that, and so did he, after I got in my work on his business."

He seemed to find challenge in the quick glance the cap'n shot at him.

"I had to do something to show her that she had made a mistake, didn't I?" demanded Mr. Low. "She knew it before she died, even if she never said so."

Cap'n Sproul critically surveyed what was left of the fat cigar, took one more suck at it, seemed to find it distasteful, and carefully laid it in a tray.

"If you don't care for that brand, here's another," invited his host.

"I ain't much of a cigar hand," affirmed the cap'n. "If it's all the same to you, I'll light my pipe. Got used to a pipe aboard ship."

"I don't want you to think I'm prejudiced in this matter at all," pursued Mr. Low. "It's only that I have had to protect myself from Sim Paine and all that belongs to him. The latest is about the worst. He's got a rag-tailed, poverty-stricken grandson that he has wasted his money on, trying to make him into a lawyer—and the brat has had the impudence to try to make love to my granddaughter. The Paines have always been stirring up one bad mess after another for me in this town. Now I've got 'em here!" He held up his fat fist and clenched it. "Now, you

do your duty as an officer, and see to it that he doesn't break up that auction to-morrow, and this town will see good riddance to bad rubbish. But old Sim Paine, I warn you, has threatened to shoot any officer or man who lays hand on him. That's the kind of a desperate renegade he is."

"He must have been a good soldier in his day, if that's his disposition."

"It's too bad they can't have a war going on all the time to take care of men like him. Have 'em out from under the feet of business men who know how to earn money and take care of it and who pay the taxes to keep the country running. As business men, you and I will stand together in this matter, I trust."

"If an auction has been advertised and the papers are all right, the auction will be held," stated the sheriff. "That's the law!" But he added under his breath: "Condemn it!"

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and stood up.

"I reckon, if you'd just as soon I would, I'll get to bed and rest my bumps. I always fight more savage when I've had a good night's sleep."

But the cap'n did not get to his repose quite as quickly as he reckoned. The heavy footfalls of the Honorable Low, his escort to the guest chamber, had hardly ceased in the depths of the mansion below, when a queer, fluttering tapping on his door signaled to the cap'n. It continued, as he listened, and at last he put on his coat—his first installment of disrobing—and opened the door.

His visitor was the pretty granddaughter, shuddering in the shadows beside the door, her lips quivering, fear and awe and entreaty battling in her eyes.

"I had to know it—I want to warn him. Perhaps he will listen to me," she gasped. "Perhaps Bob and I—I

mean his grandson—— But are you going to kill him if he doesn't give up?"

"I ain't got it dated down for tomorrow that I'm going to kill anybody, missy," declared the cap'n soothingly.

"Grandpa said you had the right, and that you had been a savage old sea captain, and that if Captain Simeon Paine dared to bristle up to you, you would kill him," whimpered the girl. "I don't know much about law and high sheriffs

—I never saw one before. But I listened at the head of the stairs and heard you say it was the law, and about fighting more savage. And Captain Paine isn't a wicked man. He's a good man. The poor folks love him. He has been persecuted. And Bob has been persecuted. I mean his grandson. He is Mr. Robert Paine, and he would be a great lawyer if he hadn't been put upon and persecuted. But I didn't know I dared to talk so much to you. I only came to ask you, sir."

"Sheriffs in these days don't hurt folks, missy. It's their business to keep folks from hurting each other."

"But Captain Paine has been persecuted so much that now he is desperate, and maybe he isn't just himself. All

he has left is his old stagecoach that he has driven so many years. He has taken pride in driving it and doing errands for all the people along the way, and saying 'hello' to them every day, and waving his hand. But the most awful thing has been taking the carrying of the mails away from him. He was always so proud because he carried the mails. He said he had fought for the United States, and he wanted to die working for the United States. But they took the mails away."

"Why did they do that?"

"Bob—I mean his grandson—told me another man had



"I had to know it——" want to warn him. Perhaps he will listen to me," she gasped.

got the contract away by offering to carry them for half as much as they paid Captain Paine. But the other man is losing money. Everybody says he is."

"I've heard a lot of folks brag about how much they love their country, missy, but I didn't know there were any folks patriotic enough to lug mails for half price," averred the sheriff.

Resolve, that was almost the hysteria of determination, had been supporting the girl in this bearding of the ogre of officialdom. But now there was a new light in her countenance. It was righteous anger.

"I pity poor Captain Paine, but I wouldn't have dared to come to you, sir, if I hadn't had another reason to drive me. I know that my grandfather hired that man to bid that price, and that he is making up to that man what he loses. And it's because our family is disgraced by such actions and because I'm ashamed that I've come to you so you won't help persecute a poor man. And perhaps you can do something to stop my grandfather from disgracing us any more, for you're a great man—you're the high sheriff."

"And just about now I wish I wasn't," muttered Cap'n Sproul.

"There's more, I suspect," the girl went on passionately. "There's some reason why Bob doesn't get on faster in our town. He has ability—he's a good lawyer. He's been with Grandfather Paine ever since his own father died. He worked hard to help himself through school so that Captain Paine wouldn't have to make too many sacrifices. And he wants to pay back the money his grandfather worked for and gave him. But nobody gives him business in this town."

"Why doesn't he leave the town, then?" asked the cap'n.

The girl flushed, and did not answer.

"Human critters can do a lot of good

with money in this world," observed Cap'n Sproul, after a pause. "But I reckon they can do more harm with it if they're so minded. Better run on to bed now, missy. I'll figger this thing over a little in my mind. The only business I have down here is to see that the law is obeyed. But in obeying it I can promise that I shan't try to come up to that reputation your grandfather has given me. He doesn't seem to be as good a judge of human nature as a man with his political experience ought to be."

The courage that had maintained the girl till then broke down. It seemed to her that she no longer needed desperate courage. This elderly man, with his kindly eyes and soothing tones, seemed to have taken up some of her burdens. She ran away, weeping girlish tears.

"Grit in a family is all right and I admire what's in the little girl," the cap'n told himself. "But as for that cussed old rock quarry of a grandfather of hers—well"—he yawned and undid his collar—"there certainly are some hard and bumpy roads in Palermo along about the time o' Christmas."

Cap'n Sproul arose in the gloom of a raw morning and dressed himself with more stealth than an honored guest is accustomed to display in the home of his host. He tiptoed downstairs, and startled the early-bird maid into a squawk when he came up behind her in the library, where she was building a fire.

"You kindly inform the Hon'able Low," said the cap'n, in cautious tones, "that, being of a restless and roving disposition, I went out to take the early air, and that I *shan't* be back to breakfast. Tell him I'll meet him at the seat of war."

The cap'n was obliged to admit to himself that the aforesaid early air was not a pleasant dose to be taken. The east was barely alight. The cold wind

bit at him with gusts. But Cap'n Sproul, in the watches of the night, had resolved to acquaint himself better with conditions in Palermo and to do so unhampered by the espionage of the eminent gentleman who had summoned him. He did not propose to be exhibited to the populace as a part of Mr. Low's appanage of persecution. When any gentleman displayed an air of proprietorship in the affairs of Cap'n Aaron Sproul, something usually happened to discourage said gentleman. So the cap'n reflected; and he revolved other thoughts which his resentment did not define as sharply.

Palermo's village straggled along the street. There were already dim lights in windows here and there, signals of stirring housewives, and of those summoned for the early chores. But the windows of the stores, the post office, the blacksmith shop, were still blank and black. Over one of the stores the cap'n descried a sign that interested him. It heralded to the litigiously inclined: "Robert Paine, attorney at law."

"With a lawyer right in the family, I should think the old gent would call for some law that would help him out of this scrape," mused the sheriff. "I'll have to look up that grandson and find out what ails him."

He walked slowly on, hoping to catch some early villager abroad, in order that he might put a few questions and acquire a little disinterested information. The tavern showed a light, and he started in that direction. But he stopped suddenly in the tavern yard. The gray dawn disclosed an old-fashioned stagecoach. Its quaint body was suspended on thoroughbraces. It was a weather-beaten veteran, gray with dried mud and guiltless of paint, but it had a sturdy look; it had been built in the days when oak and ash were stout and labor was painstaking and honest. But it was not the spectacle of

the old coach that had halted the sheriff so suddenly. There was a man inside. He put out his head when the cap'n stopped near by. From under his Grand Army hat white locks fluttered in the raw breeze. His frosty beard massed like snow over his faded muffler.

"Advance, stranger, at your peril," he called. His voice trembled and his teeth chattered, but one knew that it was from the cold, not from fear. The old blue eyes had no fear in them.

"I haven't any notion of bothering you," the cap'n assured him. "Is there anybody who proposes to do so?"

"I am making my last stand in this life here in the only thing I own in this world," declared the old man. "You're a stranger, I see. Excuse me for snapping out at you, but my enemies are flanking me. Are you the auctioneer they have sent to sell me out?"

"No, sir. But may I ask if you are Cap'n Simeon Paine?"

"That is my name, sir. It stands for something on the war rolls, but it doesn't mean anything to anybody these days."

"Planning on an early start to somewhere in that coach?" inquired the cap'n placatingly.

"I have been here all night—doing sentinel duty—with this gun." He said it quietly.

"What for?" The cap'n was hunting for straight facts on both sides of the controversy.

"It is nothing that will interest you, sir. I will simply say that a man who has used his might and his money and his trickery for a good many years so as to ruin me has brought me down to this." He beat his palm upon the panel of the coach. "It's all I own—this and two old horses I have hired put up in yon tavern stable. I have fought a good fight against him as best I could fight it. But I am honest and he is not. I borrowed money to buy food for my horses and gave a bill of sale, and he

has bought that bill of sale so as to force me to the wall. Let them try to take it. I will die here. It is my last stand."

"Cap'n Paine, if he has the documents, he has the law behind him. You're too good a man to fight the law, I'm sure."

"My creditor made a promise that he wouldn't hurry me for the money. He only wanted interest. But Hog Low bribed him. It isn't law—it's persecution. It's to ruin me finally and forever here where I have held up my head—to auction off this coach I've driven for forty years until it is a landmark. It's to shame me and take away from me the little occupation I have loved. It's to collect a crowd that will laugh at me. And I'll fight that scheme even if it is called law. There's devilishness sugar-coated by law that no man can be made to swallow. This is the only roof I've got left. I'll die protecting it."

"Cap'n Paine, do you mean to tell me you are obliged to sleep in a stage-coach in this weather? Where are your friends?"

"I'll not say that I am obliged to sleep here," stated the old man, in gentler tones. "I do have friends. I thank God I have lived in a way to make friends! I have a grandson who begged me with tears to go with him last night. But this is the only roof I own, and I'm here to protect it against a man who wants to shame me before the people—so he can say he has licked old Paine to his last whimper. That's how he brags. I'll die here first, fighting!"

"Cap'n Simeon Paine," said the man outside, in earnest tones, "I know considerable about your case and your trouble with the Hon'able Hosea Low. He told me his side last evening, but I done a lot of listening between the words he spoke—and that listening was all in your favor. So you can see I'm inclined your way. Let him have his auction. Something can be done later."

"I'll never let him have this last and final triumph over me—now when life is so near done for both of us."

"I must tell you—no matter how low-down his trick has been—you can't be allowed to shoot up a neighborhood or even pop at the man who is persecuting you. Hand that gun out to me, Cap'n Paine!"

"What right have you got to interfere in this thing?"

"I am the high sheriff of this county."

For a long time there was silence. The old man in the coach thrust his head out farther and peered more intently, the wind whipping his white locks about his ears. The cap'n in that silence slowly unbuttoned his coat and displayed the gold badge of his office on his breast.

"I heard you had come to town last night," said the veteran at last. "I heard you had come rolling up to his mansion door in one of Hog Low's plush-lined chariots. And then when I knew that he had even bought and owned the law so that he could grind me into the dirt before my neighbors, I oiled my old gun and came here and climbed into my old coach. And here I stayed the long night through. I thought of you and him as I sat here, shivering just as I have shivered in the trenches before now. I knew you were toasting your feet in front of his fire, smoking his big cigars, and having him order you how to grind me down, because you came with the law behind you. And while the chill ran through my bones, I knew you were sleeping in his fat, warm bed. Would you have slept as well if you had known I was out here?"

The sheriff did not interrupt this arraignment. He realized that his association with the rich man on the hill had afforded rightful ground for the suspicion that he was in league with the enemy. But he was in no mood to advertise what had happened in the rich

man's house or to explain how and why he had left the rich man's bed and board. He stepped close to the coach. He heard the click as the old man cocked the trigger.

"I serve notice on you, Cap'n Paine, that I'm taking no sides in this matter. I'm here as sheriff. I've hinted to you as to how I feel in regard to the Hon'able Low after hearing him talk. Now don't make a fool of yourself. Hand out that gun!"

"I have declared war," replied the stubborn old soldier. "I ain't going to treat with the enemy or be disarmed by tricks. Advance at your peril."

There was menace in the tone and in the veteran's mien a hint that his vigil and his troubles had touched his wits. The sheriff had no relish for a charge on that intrenched position. He decided to force the issue only when the crisis demanded it. In his man's heart he understood this proud old Yankee's desperation and pitied him. He swung away toward the tavern. Then he halted and turned.

"Suppose I send you out a bite of breakfast," he suggested.

"No favors from the enemy—that's my motto," snapped the irreconcilable defender of the fortress.

"I wonder if that old crab knows that the Civil War is over with," muttered the sheriff. "Take the two of these old critters operating on me, and my naturally sweet temper will get soured if I don't look out."

The landlord was scuffling listlessly about his little office, and the sheriff promptly negotiated for breakfast.

The landlord, having paid liquor fines at the county court in times past, promptly recognized this early guest.

"S'pose you've come down to referee the war, sheriff?"

"There won't be any war," was the curt rejoinder.

"Then I guess you ain't very well acquainted with old Cap Sim Paine when

he's pushed to the last ditch. And having heard it all talked pro and con in this tavern office, I can inform you, sheriff, that the sentiment of the village is with Cap Sim, law or no law."

"Meaning to say that this village is going to back up that old hornbeam in killing off men who are backed by the statutes made and provided?" asked the sheriff, with some heat.

"Well, of course we ain't approving of no general massacre of the innocents," stated the landlord, rasping his palm over his scrubby chin, "but we know when a man has been pushed farther than anybody has got a right to push him. Sim Paine has been an honest man all his life. For forty years he has driven that old coach back and forth from the railroad. And for all the old critters along that ten miles, widders and old maids and crippled old gaffers and little children, he has been the patron saint, sheriff. He has done their errands, matched dress goods, brought candy for the little mites, drew money for 'em from the little dabs in the bank that the poor old folks are trying to make last 'em through, and I'm knowing to it that when their money was all gone, he has slipped 'em a little from his own so long as he had it. He has saved many a poor critter from disgracing a Yankee family and dying on the town. He has got a short temper and he has sassed many a man in high places when they have scrouged the poor, and them he has sassed has got back at him—but he's an honest man, and if he fires that old gun to-day, we all hope he'll hit somebody who ought to be hit."

Cap'n Sproul offered no comment.

"And this is the worst time of year to tackle him as he has been tackled," pursued the loquacious landlord. "It has always been his little notion to call Christmas season his harvest time. Not because of money for extra travel! But he brings home the young folks who

have been away working hard in the cities — brings 'em back to the old homes, and he says that every time he stops his coach and a door opens and fathers and mothers rush out and grab their boys and girls in their arms, he harvests happiness. Just his notion, but he has sartin thrived on it. Says if he was rich he wouldn't ask nothing better along at Christmas time than to run a free stage and haul home the boys and girls to the folks' arms, free gratis.

"And they're coming to-day to take that old coach away from him. Old Low's stool pigeon will get the passengers. I tell ye, sheriff, law is all right, and making a man pay his debts is all right, but when folks take law and a debt and use 'em to break an old man's heart so as to satisfy an old grudge, hell is apt to burst through the crust in a community—and it ain't much to be wondered at."

"Seeing that you have finished your stump speech, perhaps you'll tell me what time breakfast will be ready, and



"Advance, stranger, at your peril," he called.

whether I'm going to get anything except conversation," said the cap'n gruffly.

The landlord scowled at him and scuffed away into the kitchen.

"He ain't got no more feelings in him than a stone drag has got," he informed his wife. "And I never knew a sheriff that did have. They stand in with the men that's got the money, and can give 'em the votes. You needn't fuss up anything very relishing for him. He ought to have stayed up at old Low's where he landed last night. I hope our

grub will choke him. Gimme a platter. I'll sly something warm out to Sim."

Cap'n Sproul ate in what seemed to be a surly mood. When the landlord, who waited on him, slammed down a dish, the sheriff picked it up, helped himself from it, and slammed it down with just as much venom as the landlord had displayed. When the cap'n finished eating, he banged down a half dollar, and stumped out of the dining room. The landlord, posted strategically at the kitchen door, backed up by his wife, hailed him just as he was disappearing.

"It's two weeks ahead of time—but I hope I'm excused, sheriff. I wish you a Merry Christmas. I never saw a man who needed one more."

Cap'n Sproul did not turn around nor did he offer retort—and if one had been present who knew the cap'n intimately, his self-repression under such circumstances would have excited huge astonishment.

The sun was up and lighted all the angularities and unkemptness of the village. The bare trees revealed the unpainted houses, and the yellow mud of the streets was frozen in deep ruts as the wheels had gouged it. It was all harsh, unyielding, somber.

"They need snow and a little Christian charity in this place to make it a fit place to live in this time of year," decided the high sheriff. "I wonder whether I can control my natural feelings—same being mixed just at present so that I don't know whether to swear or cry—and walk over there and ram a little sense into that old sanctified pirate, sitting there in that penguin pen of his."

Several early arrivals—men who had evidently decided to miss none of the events of that day—were lounging near the coach, picking the remains of their breakfasts from their teeth. When the cap'n started in that direction, the embattled veteran shook a monitory fist from the coach window.

"I've decided to establish a dead line for my enemies. Don't you come any nearer."

The sheriff swore under his breath, opened his mouth, and then closed it. He had a lot to say to that old man, but it did not suit his temper to shout an exposition of his feelings over the heads of those gaping loiterers. He marched away. He dreaded the evil moment when he would be compelled to come into close quarters with this problem.

A young man stood in his way and halted him with an inquiry:

"Are you the high sheriff?"

"Yes, sir!" snapped the cap'n. The circumstances were such in Palermo that it seemed to him his office had made him almost a pariah.

"I am Captain Paine's grandson. I'd like to have a bit of a talk with you, sir. I was coming to find you."

He was a manly fellow, and the cap'n surveyed him with full approval. He looked clean cut and mighty intelligent. But his face was white and his voice faltered with repressed emotion.

"I reckon I was coming to find you—without exactly realizing it," stated the sheriff. He glanced up at the sign on the attorney's office. He had marched straight there in his absorption. "We'll go upstairs." The young man led the way.

Cap'n Sproul, following, took him in with a mariner's keen eye for details. His clothes were neat, but they were old and cheaply made and they were darned in places. The little office was neat, too, but it was almost bare of furniture. There was a cot in one corner, its bedding tumbled. The young man hastened to it and spread it up with some confusion.

"I hurried to find you when I heard you had come downtown," he apologized, "and I left my cot in disorder. Just now I'm obliged to sleep in my office. You know we're having a little trouble in our family—this is a part of

it." He smiled sadly as he pushed the couch into the corner.

"Ain't you lawyer enough to argue your grandfather out of the foolishness he's in now?" demanded the cap'n, plunging into his subject without preface.

"I stayed out there with him until almost midnight, sir. I have pleaded with him the best I've known how. He has almost listened to me before. But he seems to have been driven out of his sane senses by this last persecution. Perhaps you can't realize how that old coach and its association——"

"I know all about it," affirmed the sheriff, so bluntly decisive that the young lawyer gazed at him with some astonishment. "But that doesn't excuse your grandfather keeping rightful claimants away from it with a gun. If he owes that money, why don't you pay the claim—or auction in the goods? You're a young man—you look bright and active—you ought to be doing fairly well in law."

"I have tried my best, sir." He stood very straight, and now his spirit flashed in his eyes. "But a man in this town has put every trig in my way that wealth and influence could put there. I suppose I could have gone away, but this was my home town, and my grandfather wanted me to stay here and show folks what I could do; and as he had made many sacrifices for me when I was in school, it was only right that I should try to please him."

"And did you have any other reasons for hanging around here after you realized you couldn't get ahead in this town?" demanded the sheriff, giving Lawyer Paine a very sharp look.

The young man hesitated. He flushed. Then he replied with simple directness: "I did have a reason, sir. A hopeless one. But I was asked to stay—I promised, and I'm staying."

"You're one of the few lawyers I've ever met who could tell the truth when

he really didn't have to," declared the sheriff, with unction. "Keep it up and you and me will get along first class together. And seeing how things have gone with you, you haven't got money enough, eh, to help your grands'r out of this scrape?"

"No, sir. I've been helping with every cent I could rake and scrape out of such little business as came to me. It wasn't much, but after he lost the mail contract, I gave all I had because the stage didn't pay. You see, sheriff, grandfather does so much free when folks can't afford to settle!"

"Yes, I've been hearing about the old lunatic," yapped the cap'n. He checked the young man's resentful exclamation. "He's getting me into this scrape along with himself just as fast as he can, and you can't be expected to hooray for a man like that if you're sheriff. Now, see here, young man—if he won't listen to appeals from you or me, something has got to be done. We've got to smooth the thing. I see you've got a pretty hefty law library here." He waved his hand at rows of books carefully covered with brown-paper jackets. "Law books are valuable. I'll lend you money on 'em so you can go into that auction and save the property."

"You'd better look the books over and estimate their value," suggested the lawyer.

"No need of it," cried the cap'n, flapping his hand. "I know all about what a law library costs. Just name what money you want. Here it is."

He pulled out his big wallet.

Robert Paine went slowly to the bookcase, and picked out a volume at random. He handed it to the cap'n, open. It was a government report of the sort that congressmen distribute free to all who ask. "They're all the same kind," stated the lawyer. "I've covered them with brown paper and marked them as law books with pen



When the cap'n finished eating, he banged down a half-dollar, and stumped out of the dining room.

and ink. The whole lot is not worth hauling away. Therefore, I can't take your money."

"Well, I've heard of all kinds of fakes, but this is a new one on me," exploded the cap'n.

"I suppose it is a fake, as you say, sir. But clients are not much impressed by a law office where there are no books. I did have a law library. I taught school to earn the money. But when times got hard for grandfather and me, I sold the books off a few at a time. I gave him the money. He thought it came from my law practice. But I lied to him. Our enemy had driven away all my clients."

The sheriff looked at the young man for some moments.

"I'll lend you the money, anyway," he declared. "Lawyer Paine, I reckon you're a good investment."

"That's a mighty kind and noble offer, Mr. Sheriff," returned the grandson. "But it's a poor and makeshift way for us to get out of the trouble we're in—to borrow money from a

stranger without security. I can't accept that offer, and you must realize that grandfather wouldn't."

"Probably wouldn't," agreed the cap'n, rather sullenly. "There seems to be a streak of Yankee foolish stubbornness right through your family. I see you're bound to get me into all the trouble you can. I've got a favor to ask of you."

"I'll do anything I can, sir."

"You go down and tell your grandfather that I understand and respect his feelings, but that when it comes to a case of doing my bounden duty as sheriff, with a crowd looking on and ready to spread the news around over this county, I'm just as hard a subject as he is, and when we knock together, the fire is bound to fly. And if, while you're telling him, you can get near enough to yank that gun away, so much the better. I'll wait here till you get back."

During the young man's absence, he sat on one of the three wooden chairs, and gazed at the backs of the imitation

library, and pondered on the intricacies in New England characters.

When young Paine returned, his worried countenance predicated his message.

"Pardon me if I smooth it down just a little, Mr. Sheriff. He sent word that——"

"I don't want it smoothed down, sir. I want it in exactly his own words—direct and official."

The young man drew a long breath.

"Tell High Sheriff Sproul that I'm harder than he is, for I'm nigh petrified with the cold, and he got thawed in a rich man's bed last night. Tell High Sheriff Sproul that if he was in my place and old Hog Low was going to lash him with this final snapper on the whip of persecution, he would send to me, were I sheriff, the same message I'm sending to him, to wit: My gun is in my hands, waiting for the enemy. Let him come and try to take it, and be d——d to him."

The sheriff blinked at the messenger without betraying any especial emotion.

"I tried to take his gun away, but he clubbed it and struck at me," added the grandson.

The sheriff set his elbows on his knees and studied the cracks in the worn floor.

"I suppose there isn't anything for it now but to let the auction go on," faltered young Paine.

"The auction will go on, sir." The cap'n did not raise his eyes.

"Let happen what will?"

"Whatever happens after fair warning isn't any of my business, after I'm sure that the law is behind me."

"But his mind is all on fire with what he has suffered in the past. That poor old man isn't responsible."

"Can't allow myself to be backed down in my own county, sir."

"Will you arrest him yourself or summon a posse?"

The young man thought the sheriff

was never going to reply to that question. With his eyes on the floor, he sat for a long five minutes, rolling his thumbs around and around each other. Then he rose, banged his fist on the table, and shouted: "I'm going to summon a posse, and it's going to be an old whangdoodler!"

According to the handbills, signed "Henshaw Hook, Auctioneer," the hour set for the sale of Captain Simeon Paine's poor possessions was noon, sharp. But the Honorable Hosea Low drove down into the village a full hour ahead of that time. He had waited impatiently at his mansion for the return of that recreant high sheriff who had left his bed and board so unceremoniously. He ordered his man to drive close to the crowd in the tavern square, and he peered to right and left through the windows of his snug coupé. Then he lowered the glass and asked the nearest man where the sheriff was.

"Don't know—only that he ain't here. Ain't been here this forenoon since early, so they tell me."

Mr. Low growled some remarks to himself. And while he growled, he gazed over the heads of the crowd, and his eyes met those of the old man in the coach. The face under the faded Grand Army hat was blue with the cold, but its deep lines heralded defiance and determination. The muzzle of the gun protruded through the coach window.

Mr. Low did not seem to find the spectacle of his victim a pleasing one, and his eyes began to rove. They fell on one Alanson Meigs, the local deputy sheriff. The deputy strolled to the coupé, obeying an imperious gesture.

"Where's your boss, the high sheriff?"

"Only heard he was up to your house—that's all I know."

"I supposed he was down here attending to his duties. Why is that man allowed to stay in that stagecoach?"

"I ain't got nothing to do with this case nohow," declared the deputy. His little eyes blazed. "You passed it around this town that I wasn't any good as an officer, and that you'd sent for the high sheriff. Now you and him can run it. You may like to be informed that old Cap Paine says he's going to shoot to kill, and up to date he has usually kept his word in anything he has promised to do."

"Does Sheriff Sproul know of those threats?"

"According to rumors, he was down here early this morning, and the old cap told him so to his face. I reckon," drawled the deputy, "that pressing and pertickler business has called him back to the shire town. With him out of the way, choice of targets seems to be between you and Hen Hook, hon'able." There was some scattered laughter among the men who were near enough to overhear.

Mr. Low pulled up his window and rolled his furs about his legs. "Take a coward and a crazy man, and a citizen's rights in law in this county are in a fine predicament," he muttered. "I wonder if old Hook has run away and hid, too!"

But Mr. Henshaw Hook arrived very soon with all the flourish and uproar that characterized his breezy personality. He came clattering into the village on a muddy road cart with two wheels.

"Here we are, good people!" he shouted in staccato. "H. Hook, the friend of everybody—always smiling, always gay, ready to drive dull care away!"

"Mebbe you won't be quite so popular with one man here about the time you start that auction sale," confided the citizen who volunteered to hold Mr. Hook's nag. "Old cap sets there in his stagecoach like he done behind the stone wall at Gettysburg. Says he's going to pot somebody—and if I was the auc-

tioner who was going to knock down his property, I reckon I'd want armor plate on my pants. He's in a savage state—been setting there all night."

"Then he needs to be cheered up with some of my merry chatter," declared Mr. Hook, wholly undismayed. "I never saw the man I couldn't make laugh. I'm the original human sunburst. I make an auction an occasion of joy, and I make a bankrupt lark and play while his goods are going under the hammer."

He started to step down from his road cart, but the menace in Captain Paine's face and the sight of the obtrusive gun barrel made him take second thought. He climbed upon the seat of his vehicle.

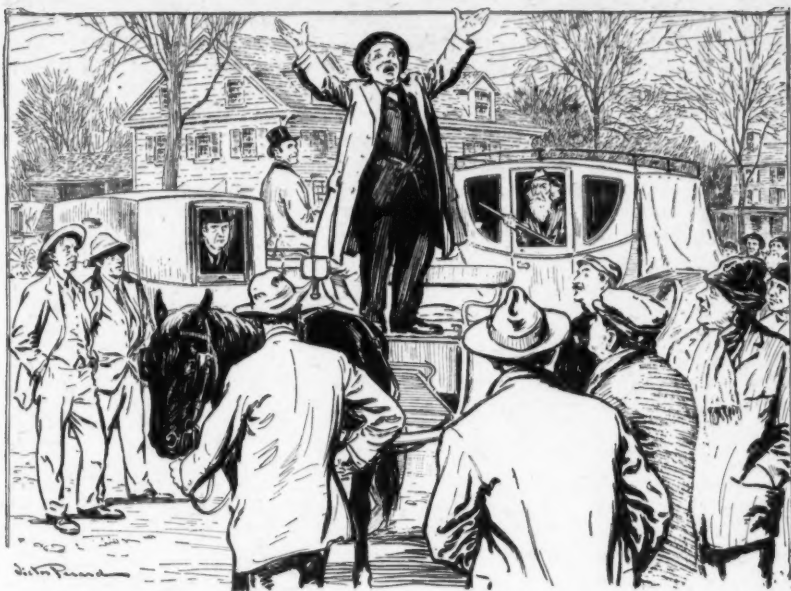
"Listen, all ye who would be of good cheer," he barked. "Now that we are gathered here, let us all be bright and gay. Merry Christmas is on the way. I call your undivided attention to yonder fine old goose pen on wheels, to be here and now sold at public auction to the highest bidder. Cap Paine, who sits inside of it, peeking out like a tomcat in a peck measure, has always gone with goose pen aforesaid, but he does not go with it to-day. Nor does the gun go."

The harried old man within the coach shrieked an interruption.

"Let me tell you that this gun does go, you damnation yawper!" he shouted, in tones raucous with anger and weariness. "It will go in about two seconds if you try to sell my property out from under me."

He rose and thrust arms, shoulders, and gun out of the narrow window.

"Don't you dare to stand there and make fun of the old stage that has lugged the United States mails for forty years, and has brought the boys and girls back to their folks' arms. I'm making my last stand here, and when I go down fighting for my rights and my good name, somebody is going down with me."



"I call your undivided attention to yonder fine old goose pen on wheels, to be here and now sold at public auction to the highest bidder."

He cocked both barrels of the gun. "You've got the law behind you, Hook," bawled Mr. Low from the shelter of his coupé. "There ought to be a sheriff here to back you up and yank that old fool out of a piece of property that doesn't belong to him. But if the high sheriff is a coward, that fact needn't make one of you. I'm here. I want my money. Go ahead with your auction."

But Mr. Hook did not display any alacrity in resuming. He fingered the wrinkles on his scraggy neck for a few moments, stared dubiously at the muzzle of Captain Paine's gun, and descended from the seat of his road cart. It evidently occurred to him that he was offering too much of himself as a target.

"You go ahead and run off this auction," blustered the creditor. "Start the bidding!"

"How much am I offered for one

stagecoach?" faltered Mr. Hook. He was crouching behind a barricade of humanity. All his accustomed banter had gone out of his voice.

"Two coffin nails and a bungdown copper," jeered somebody. "That's all she's wuth, judging from present prospects of delivery."

"Do your bidding," shouted Low. "I'll have an officer here later who will uphold the law, even if the high sheriff of this county is a coward."

"Seeing that the high sheriff is here, ready to attend to his duty, you needn't bother to send for anybody else," said Cap'n Aaron Sproul. All eyes had been to the front, and he had come from the rear unobserved.

"Where have you been, sir?" demanded the village autocrat.

"Summoning a posse as the law provides. And they're all sworn in as my special deputies. Make way—make

way!" he shouted, thrusting the bystanders aside. And through the lane he had made came several big wagons packed full of his "specials." But it was a strange sheriff's posse. They were all elderly folks—women with heads shrouded in knitted "clouds," old men, mittened and swathed. The big wagons swung close to the old stage-coach and halted.

"Cap'n Simeon Paine," announced the high sheriff, "here's my posse. You've got to be taken into camp, and I've brought 'em here to do it. You sit there and look at 'em for a while, and come back to your senses. I'll be tending to a little official business in the meantime."

He strode to Low's coupé, threw open the door, and sat in beside the owner, closing the door on their conference.

"Hon'able Low," said the sheriff, in firm tones, "you look at that posse, too. They are a few of the folks along that stage line whom a poor old saint has tuggedlugged for and helped during the years while you've been scrouging ten per cent interest money out of your neighbors. Now I'm no hand for long speeches. You and I can get to business short and sharp. The boys up at the shire tell me that you're laying your wires in politics so that you'll be nominated by our party as next governor. You pull your old claws off'm that poor man now and forever, or I'll have that posse out there stand up here in public, one by one, and tell their stories of what that old man has done for them and for others, and I'll print them stories in the newspapers beside the story of what you have done—paying advertising rates for same. And then we'll see how near to being governor of this State you'll come."

The sheriff's hard eyes bored the flaming optics of the enraged magnate.

"At last you've met up with a gent that's fully your size and has all of your hitting strength," added the

sheriff. "Voters will swallow a good deal in a candidate—but there's such a thing as a candidate having too many quills. I can fetch out facts that will post you as the meanest critter this State has ever produced. Them facts have been hidden in this town till now. If you want 'em spread, I'm the man that can spread 'em."

"You have taken oath to back up the law," sputtered Low.

"But I never agreed to back down the right."

"Get out of this coupé! I'm going home."

"I'm going with you," stated the sheriff. "I've got some talking to do to you, sir. And if you want to wind up your career as the next governor of this State, you'd better listen to me and act according. I'm going right home with you and do that talking." He called to the crowd: "Auction is going to take a recess. And I order you to take Cap'n Simeon Paine and his posse into the tavern and get 'em warm and give 'em dinner and charge same to me."

Then the sheriff ordered Low's driver to whip up—and the driver got a side glance at his employer and obeyed.

An hour later, flushed, angry, but quivering and fearful, the Honorable Low sat limply in his deep chair and realized that the big hands which the high sheriff flourished under his nose held and could crush his pet political fabric. For Hosea Low knew that voters despise certain traits in a man when those traits are exposed broadcast for all to canvass.

"But here in this town where I have bossed things—you haven't left me any hole to crawl out of. If I quit on Paine, they'll all laugh at me. If a man is laughed at around home he's made miserable," whimpered the Honorable Low. "If I only had a good excuse——"

"I'll give you a corker," suggested the sheriff, a queer glint in his eyes.

This masterful readiness with expedients seemed to get Mr. Low on the run.

"What is it?" he inquired weakly.

The cap'n gazed down at him for some time without reply.

"Better take a firm grip on the arms of that chair," he advised at last. "It's going to jump you."

Low goggled at him.

"It will help you consid'ble if you remember back to the days when you were young. Also say to yourself: 'It's 'most Christmas and I'll do something this year to celebrate.'"

"Fo'r Heaven's sake, what do you want me to do?"

"If you make the announcement I advise, everybody in town will say: 'That's so! He's just right! Hooray for Hon'able Low!' And it makes a prominent man feel good when his townsmen say that. You can walk out of this row with dignity, and carry off all the honors."

"But how—how—how?"

"Hold tight! Just say to inquiring friends: 'Why, folks, Cap'n Simeon Paine and I can't be anything but good friends for the rest of our lives, because his grandson and my granddaughter have fallen in love, and are going to get married.'"

Cap'n Sproul set his broad hand against the gasping magnate's breast and pushed him down into his chair and held him there.

"If you die of apoplexy now, you'll never live to be the next governor," he warned. "And if you open your mouth just now, you may say something to me that will make me fight you in politics. You listen. I'm going to talk to you some more."

And on and on in that library went

the cap'n's steady tones, and his up-raised finger beat emphasis.

And in the end he grabbed the limp hand of the Honorable Low and shook it.

"That sounds more like it," he declared heartily. "Give him his chance and he'll make one of the smartest men in this State—and think what he'll mean to you as a campaign manager among the young voters! Why, hon'able, he's a real Christmas present!"

So it came about that Cap'n Aaron Sproul dropped a strange message in at the office of Lawyer Robert Paine, on his way down into the village, and the young man started for the big house on the hill, walking like one in a dream.

The sheriff's conference with Captain Simeon Paine was somewhat prolonged that evening in the tavern. But at last the sheriff convinced the veteran that, now that the feud was settled and the mail contract was to be restored, the Palermo stage line offered suitable opportunity for the investment of a little spare cash of the sheriff's.

The sheriff strolled out to the stable with Captain Paine, who wanted to be sure that the horses were comfortable. The wind was stilled. The heavens were without a star. There was a mystic silence—a hushed, tense stillness over all. Suddenly the old stage driver drew back his head. The lantern lighted his features. The radiance of a smile dawned there. On his cheeks two snowflakes had lighted. They melted while the sheriff gazed, and they mingled with a moisture that must have been tears.

"Thank God, for the snow is coming and I can bring the boys and girls home behind the bells and over smooth roads!" said the veteran. "It's going to be a real Christmas!"





A Tale of Comparative Venom

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON GRANT

CYANIDE cocktails and arsenic stew
Is pizen to certain degrees;
But I'm positive quite that the sea serpent's bite
Is fuller of ginger than these.

I once seen a sea serpent down in Brazil
Bite a whale in the side o' the brain,
And, by Jiminy crickets, that whale he got rickets
And blew off his head in his pain!

I once seen a sea serpent over in Guam
Shoot a stream o' hot juice from his eye
Which sot up such gasses it killed off the masses
To the tune o' the "Sweet By-and-by."

And when I was sailin' the *Sadie Huroo*
Me fine constitution was shook
By a tale in a million—so sea serpentillian
It ought to be told in a book.

We was nearly approachin' the harbor of Squill
When our skipper, the sad Capting Joy,
Grew green and then yellor and set up a beller,
"Avast us! Sea serpent ahoy!"

And out o' the sea squirmed a squidgery mass
Which wriggled and squaloped and snum;
Then it opened its talons, which must-a held gallons,
And straight for the vessel it swum.

And the fust that we knowed it had fastened its teeth
In the armor-plate side of our craft,
Then it croaked like a toady and hissed like cold soddy
And disappeared vaguely abaft.

"We're lucky," says Leopold Perkins, our mate,
"There was none of us bit by the cuss!"
Says sad Capting Joy, "'Tis a sorry day, boy,
When he pizened the vessel for us."

And truer than truth was the words that he spoke,
For we'd scarce went a nautical mile
When our ship, without sinkin', it started to shrinkin'
Like a suit o' the shoddy-made style.

From bowsprit to stern shrunk that vessel so fast
That, as smaller and smaller she got,
We huddled together like sheep round bellwether,
Quite cramped—and the tropics is hot.

She shrunk and she shrunk, till that hundred-foot bark,
When sixty-five hours was plumb through,
Didn't look any bigger than some one's yacht rigger,
And smaller and smaller she grew.

At the end o' four days we was down to the size
Of a lifeboat. And after a week,
To shorten me story, we'd shrunk to a dory.
So we rowed into port, so to speak.

And 'twas lucky we landed at Portugal, Spain;
For, as sad Capting Joy says, says he,
"If our ship had got smaller, I bet a half dollar
We'd had to walk home on the sea."



The Story of Mattie Miller

Edward Oliver Potter, the successful novelist, tells his friend and illustrator, Archibald Starr, that he needs material and inspiration for his new novel. Starr assists in securing him a position as principal of the high school in the little Pennsylvania Dutch town of Adamstown. The artist confesses his admiration for Miss Beatrice Jenkins Ford, whom he has recently met at her débutante party. Miss Ford, adopted stepdaughter of the multimillionaire, Stanley Ford, of New York, has decided early in life that society does not interest her, and that she means to have a "career." Against the will of her family she goes through college, and, to secure experience, accepts, as Miss Beatrice Jenkins, the position of assistant principal in the high school at Adamstown. Under the name of "E. Oliver," the novelist arrives and takes up his residence at the home of John Miller, whose family consists of his third wife, small son, and a grown daughter named Mattie. The latter suffers from a paralyzed hand, but performs uncomplainingly the entire work of the house. Gentle and unselfish, she is most unfairly treated by her father and stepmother, and immediately stirs Oliver's sympathy and interest. The high school opens in original fashion, and the new principal and his beautiful assistant find themselves curiously puzzled by each other, with a piquant and growing interest. Oliver wins admiration for the way he deals with Sam Dietz, the school bully, in expelling him from his classes. He interests Miss Jenkins in Mattie Miller's unfortunate case, and she promises to call on her. A letter from Archibald Starr tells Oliver of his continued infatuation for Miss Beatrice Ford, who is said to be traveling in Europe. He promises to make an early week-end visit to Oliver. In the meantime Mrs. Miller's brother Joseph, old, ill, and alone, arrives from Mexico for a visit. He is coldly received and about to be turned away, when Oliver intercedes for him. After an attack of heart failure, at the supper table, when Mattie ministers to him, he asks the family to come to his room to receive the gifts he has brought them. For Mattie there is a beautiful opal necklace, which Mrs. Miller, in her greed and jealousy, tries to keep from her stepdaughter. Her transparent deceit tempts Uncle Jo to play a little joke, to the discomfiture of his sister, but to the great delight of Oliver. The following day Miss Jenkins comes to call on Mattie, but Mrs. Miller intercepts, and does everything in her power to prevent a meeting between the two. By a little ruse, and assisted by Oliver, the determined young teacher escapes to the kitchen and makes friends with Mattie. Walking home with her, Oliver again speaks of his deep interest in Mattie. Upon his return he finds Mrs. Miller in a furious temper, forbidding Mattie to leave the house to procure a little whisky for Uncle Jo. Oliver goes for it himself, winning Mattie's gratitude, and the displeasure of the Millers, who order the sick man out of the house. The next morning Mattie and Uncle Jo move into an empty little house in the town, and begin housekeeping. Uncle Jo gives Mattie two hundred dollars for these expenses. Oliver sees her at the grocery store, and, in her glowing face and air of freedom, reads her happiness. He walks with her, and they discuss the writings of Edward O. Potter, her favorite novelist. Oliver promises to give her a set of Potter's works. A letter from Archibald Starr arrives, informing Oliver of the artist's plan to visit him over the coming week-end. Oliver takes dinner with Miss Jenkins at The Swan, and marvels at some of her luxurious tastes. He asks permission to introduce his expected guest, whom he calls Mr. Pitzer Yutzzy, of Lancaster. Miss Jenkins cordially invites them both to attend her Friday evening suffrage talk at the schoolhouse.

From this point the story continues on the opposite page



The Fortunes of Mattie Miller

By Helen R. Martin

Author of "Barnabetta," "Tillie, a Mennonite Maid," "The Parasite," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

CHAPTER XX.

I GOT two favors to ask of you, Mr. Oliver."

Uncle Jo told them off on his fingers, his tone cautiously lowered, though the door between his bedroom and the room in which Mattie was clearing away the remains of their good supper of pancakes and strong coffee with real cream was tightly closed.

The dingy little bedchamber of the tiny cottage was sparsely, though adequately, furnished, and the shaded lamp on a table by the bed, and the small stove in which a good fire burned brightly, and before which the two men were seated in rocking-chairs, gave it an air of comfort and coziness.

"He's going to ask me for money," thought Oliver, making a rapid calculation in his mind as to how much he could spare the old fellow.

"Firstly, I want fur you to please git me a Lancaster lawyer to come out here as soon as you otherwise kin."

"A lawyer?"

"I got a couple of trinkets I want to will to Mattie, and I want to git the law to tie 'em up so Emmy can't git 'em."

"Why don't you just hand them over to Mattie now?"

"Emmy might git 'em off of her. And Mattie would be too apt to sell 'em fur to buy me whisky. *That's* why I don't give 'em to her now."

"It would be expensive, you know, getting a lawyer from Lancaster, Uncle Jo."

"That makes nothing."

"You don't mind the expense?"

"I got the price, professor."

"But two hundred dollars isn't in-exhaustible when it has to pay for rent, fuel, food, medicine, whisky, and—and the final expenses, Uncle Jo."

"Mattie tole you, then, did she, about the two hundred dollars I put in her hands?"

"Yes, she tole me."

"You and hers pretty good friends, ain't?"

"I'm proud to say we are."

"Well, say!" Jo leaned toward Oliver and spoke just above a whisper. "I got another hundred dollars in my pants pocket to pay fur my whisky and this here lawyer."

"Oh, you have?"

"Yes. Mattie don't know it."

"Why do you hide it from her?"

"I got a private use fur a little cash. This here lawyer, fur instance. I don't want her to know about him. I'll see him at your school building. Dare I?"

"All right."

"Or, if I ain't able to git there, you git Mattie out fur a walk jist before he turns up. Will you do me this here favor, mister?"

"Of course."

The first installment of this story appeared in the October number of SMITH'S.

"Will you 'tend to it soon? It darsent be put off, you know."

"I'll phone to Lancaster to-night."

"And say! Choose a lawyer that knows good whisky when he smells it, and ast him to bring me a couple quarts along out. I got to have the real stuff. I can't go this damn' slop Ben Sla-baugh sells at his drug store."

"Two quarts of good whisky, Uncle Jo? What do you usually pay a quart?"

"Not less'n two dollars. I guess that's why I'm poor, mister. I lived a little high when I *had*. Tell the lawyer I'll pay him fur the whisky, all right."

"You'd better not be too rash with what money you have," Oliver gravely warned him.

"I ain't got more'n a couple months to live, Mr. Oliver."

"Well, Uncle Jo, you couldn't, if you were a millionaire, be better taken care of than you will be in Mattie's hands."

"Don't I know that? That's why I'm leavin' her them couple of trinkets. They're worth a few hundred dollars, I guess."

"Ah?"

"Yes, you bet you! And she thinks she's takin' care of me fur nothin'! Out of the pure kindness of her heart! Ain't she the peach of a girl, Mr. Oliver? I tell you," he exclaimed, poking Oliver in the ribs with his elbow, "the feller that gits Mattie is lucky!"

"He certainly won't need to be pitied."

"Well, I guess, anyhow, not! And mind you what a virtuous female she is, too—heh?"

"Yes?"

"And say! She ain't bad lookin', neither. Heh?"

"She's almost as pretty as she is dear and lovable."

"You think?"

"Yes, I think."

"Well, say! Any of this here three

hundred dollars that's left over, after my remains is interred, is *hern*."

"She won't be married for her money, then, will she? She's safe, at least, from wicked fortune hunters."

"Heh?" Uncle Jo eyed Oliver curiously. "You don't think it will be much—together with the price of them trinkets? They'll bring considerable."

"I'm very glad for Mattie that you can leave her a little something."

"Enough to git her a *aus stire*, mebby, anyhow."

"But," Oliver objected hastily, the words *aus stire* suggesting a village bridegroom, "I'd hate to see Mattie married to a man of no education; one of these crude brutes that don't know how to treat a woman. She's too good for any man I ever saw within thirty miles of Adamstown."

"Ain't there no educated man nearer than thirty miles off?" inquired Jo innocently.

"I haven't met any."

"*You're* got a little education. And I think you'd know pretty good how to take care of a wife. You're got nice *manners*, anyhow. Now *my manners*," added Jo disparagingly, "ain't so good, mebby. But, mister, I got a kind heart."

"I know you have, Jo."

"And my heart tells me"—he suddenly slapped Oliver on the shoulder—"that you're the husband I'd pick out fur my Mattie!"

"*Me!* Oh, but I'm not a marrying man, Uncle Jo!"

"Why ain't you? You don't *look* like the kind of a stick that never gits married."

"Can a man take care of a family on seventy-five dollars a month?"

"Easy—here in Adamstown."

"Well, here in Adamstown I suppose he could."

"Well, ain't you livin' in Adamstown?"

"Not very long."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"I shan't be leaving at once, however, Uncle Jo."

"What's o' matter with Adamstown? You ain't got no need to run down Adamstown. Why, Congressman Bender, *he* come from Adamstown, yet! Yes, anyhow! Who'd ever uv thought"—Jo shook his head reminiscently—"that Al Bender would give a man like that, sich a dirty boy as he was!"

"But, you see," said Oliver, "he got out of Adamstown."

"Have you a chancet to better yourself, then?"

"Next year, perhaps."

"A good-payin' school so that you *kin* git married?" asked Jo hopefully.

"But a teacher's position is as uncertain as a preacher's or an actor's. He never knows when he may be fired."

"But a man has to take his risks, professor," said Jo impatiently.

"For himself. He has no right to risk the welfare and happiness of a wife and children."

"Ain't you *never* a-goin' to take the risk?" Jo inquired in a tone of disappointment.

"My friends advise me to marry for money."

"Aw, git out! You ain't that kind of a skunk! Ain't you never been in love?"

"On an average of once a year."

"If you got in love *right*, you wouldn't hold back fur no *prudence*. Aw, I believe you're jist guyin' me."

"You'd like to see me 'settled'?"

"Well, mister, leave me tell you—this thing of livin' and dyin' single, nice and safe from the anxious cares of a family to keep—there ain't nothin' in it. It's lonesome. Better have all the anxious cares a-goin' than not have no person to be anxious *about*. Gosh! If I was a young, strong buck like you, and had a chancet at a sweet young thing like Mattie!"

"Hush—'sh! She'll hear you."

"But say! She thinks a lot of you."

"I hope she does." Oliver rose rather abruptly. "I'd better go over to the drug store now, Uncle Jo, and telephone for your lawyer."

"All right," Uncle Jo responded, settling back rather dejectedly in his chair and stretching his feet to the fire.

"I promise you one thing, Uncle Jo."

"Well?"

"When Mattie no longer has you—I will look after her—I promise you—until she is married."

"But look-a-here! It ain't fur Mattie's sake, but fur *yourn* I was suggestin' the match. You're a feller that's *deservin'* of a prize like Mattie. I ain't met up with many fellers in my life, I kin tell you, that I'd say was good enough fur that jool of a girl in there," with a twirl of his thumb toward the closed door of the other room.

"Uncle Jo," said Oliver sentimentally, "does any man on earth ever feel himself *worthy* of a good woman's love? He can only accept it humbly as the gift of her graciousness."

"Say! Don't you say them things pretty, though? It sounds like sich a novel."

Oliver laughed as he slipped into his overcoat and picked up his hat. "By the way!" He drew from his pocket a parcel. "I telephoned last night to a wine merchant at Lancaster and had this sent out by the morning train." Unwrapping the parcel, he presented Joseph with a quart flask of whisky. "You'll find this all right, Uncle Jo."

"Now, if that wasn't awful kind of you!" Jo responded, much touched. "Golly!" he exclaimed, as he drew out the cork and smelled it. "Ain't that bully? Chuck that other out, will you?—so Mattie don't git 'em mixed. I certainly am glad to have this here fur to-night!" he repeated as Oliver went to the window and hurled out into the road the bottle of cheap whisky that had stood ready for use on the table

by the bed. "You certainly are all wool and a yard wide, professor!"

"But I wouldn't dose a *dog* that I had any regard for with Slabaugh's whisky, Uncle Jo. Well!" He offered his hand to the invalid—his strong, fine hand that expressed peculiarly, even to Uncle Jo's crude observation, the young man's combined power and sensitiveness. "Good night, Uncle Jo. I hope you'll rest comfortably."

"You'll come in now and again—ain't?"

"Every day, if possible."

Joseph, listening intently as his visitor left the house, heard with regret that he did not linger to speak with Mattie longer than just to bid her good night.

"I mebbly scared him off. I better not meddle. Them things is best left to themselves. Fur all I know, he mebbly *has* a girl. In there at Lancaster or wherever. Or mebbly he's sweet on that there lady assistant Mattie says he's got. But," sighed Joseph, "I certainly would like to see him make up to Mattie—a feller like that—that kin be kind and generous and helpful where he don't look fur no return. Him and Mattie would be wonderful well suited together—seems to *me*, anyhow!"

When Mattie came in to help him get ready for bed, she noticed the new flask of whisky.

"And," Uncle Jo added, when he had accounted for it, "when a man goes out of his way fur a person that's as down and out as me, it means he's layin' up treasure fur hisself in heaven, Mattie. I mean the heaven in his own heart—I don't know nothin' about no other heaven. I'm waitin' to find out—if I ever do find out! Well," concluded Jo, "it certainly does a body a lot of good to meet up with two sich folks, in this here selfish world, like you and Mr. Oliver, Mattie!"

Mattie, without answering, kissed him good night and went softly out of the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

Upon Oliver's return from school next day at noon, Mrs. Miller greeted him with the shameful news that her brother had never left Adamstown at all, but was actually living alone with that designing stepdaughter of hers in the mean little cottage at Herr's corner. The two of them—the man and the girl—living there alone together! It was scandalous! Mr. Miller had learned of it from Silas Groff at the store, and Mrs. Miller had at the same time been informed of this family disgrace by one of her neighbors.

"To think how my brother fooled us yet, pretendin' he didn't have a cent and thinkin' we'd keep him here and wait on him and nurse him free of board—and him all the time hoardin' up what he has to leave to that sly little hussy!"

It will be seen that Mrs. Miller, like the rest of her type and class, was not strong on the side of logic and reasonableness.

"Your brother's illness," returned Oliver, "will soon eat up what little he has, Mrs. Miller, and Mattie's unselfish care of him will go quite unrewarded—in your sense of reward."

"Yes, and you'll *see* how quick Mattie'll leave him and look out for herself when what he's got is all, a'ready! It's an awful disgrace to her pop, her actin' so shameless."

Oliver did not think it worth while to discuss this point.

"Why, Silas Groff, he says Jo turned over a *lot* of money to Mattie—near all he had by him," affirmed Mrs. Miller, "to spend the way she wants! You'll see how she'll be toggin' herself in better clo'es than I ever had—and on *my brother's* money! I tell John he ought to go round there and make Mattie give it up—what Jo gev her."

Oliver marveled, as he ate his poorly cooked dinner, at a woman's extraor-



"I'm going! If I don't go right away, I'll—I'll kiss you!"

dinary capacity for making herself see crooked.

"It'll give Mattie an awful name," Mrs. Miller continued; "workin' a poor sick man like this here—and livin' sich a shameless life—and bein' so bold about it yet!"

"Oh, I'll take care of that, Mrs. Miller—every one shall know the truth from me! I think you'll find that every one will have the highest praise for Mattie's heroic unselfishness."

"Unselfishness! Well, to be sure, we'd uv been unselfish, too, if we'd uv knowed Jo had a little. We'd uv been only too *glad* to keep him here."

"To get it out of him!" Oliver exclaimed sharply.

"Better that it comes to us than to one that ain't no blood relation of hisn. And what's she a-goin' to do when it's *all*, oncet?"

"She'd not desert him because he was penniless, Mrs. Miller."

"She's got nothin' to keep him on. He'll have to go to the poorhouse. And if he hadn't uv deceived *us* so—makin' us think he hadn't a cent! Yes, Mattie worked him the way she works you and everybody else—to think she's a angel and us mean actin' and stingy! But *yous* will all find out some day how

designin' she is! Why, here this mornin' didn't my brother Jo have a Lancaster lawyer out here? Silas Groff, he says he don't know what fur wanted of a lawyer, but he says mebby that there attorney wasn't a high-stepper! And when he left town ag'in, he was just chucklin' over what Jo had tole him! I'm sure I don't know what fur comic thing he did tell him. Jo'd better be thinkin' of serious things, like his bein' lost if he don't repent. But I'd like to know what he wanted off of a lawyer. I make no doubt Mattie put him up to it."

Oliver laughed.

"To think, Mr. Oliver, you'd stand up fur a girl that would come so between a brother and sister!"

"Now look here, Mrs. Miller! You turned out of your house your sick and dying brother, who had always been kind and generous to you! You know as well as I do that it was your heartlessness to him that came between you and him, and that Mattie's goodness to him is wholly disinterested. She stood by him when she thought he was a pauper; when she believed that what she did for him was costing her the only home she had. You *know* this—however much you and Mr. Miller may try to persuade yourselves and others to think differently."

"Well, I must say, Mr. Oliver, it don't look very nice of you to talk down on us 'and you livin' here with us."

"I'm inclined to think that nothing I could say could possibly add anything to the strong indignation the people here feel at your turning your dying brother out of your house."

With that, Oliver rose and left the table and the house—feeling sure that besides the wound her avarice had received, the knowledge that public opinion was against her would punish Mrs. Miller as she deserved to be punished.

It was not until three days later, on

the eve of Archibald Starr's expected arrival, that he went again to the cottage at Herr's corner, to learn how Uncle Jo was doing.

He found the invalid in his easy-chair before his bedroom stove, looking distinctly thinner, paler, and weaker, but entirely comfortable and peaceful. Every little appointment of the room manifested the thoughtful, competent nursing he received.

At a hint from Uncle Jo, Mattie left the two men alone together. Oliver's eyes followed her as she went from the room. There was an elasticity in her step, a light in her face, a confidence in her womanly, tender voice that was wholly new to her and that fascinated not only the novelist in him—but the man.

"It's wonderful—ain't?—the way Mattie's bloomin' out under a little kindness and affection and liberty?" Jo said feebly, his head resting against the pillow of his easy-chair. "Emmy and John must have used her hard and mean, Mr. Oliver, when the life she's leadin' now seems sich a nice change to her! A body wouldn't think a pretty young thing like that would find it so damned nice hangin' round an old, dyin' feller like me and waitin' on him night and day. It ain't as if she knowed she was inheritin' them couple jools, neither. I ain't tole her. I don't want fur her to know it!" he said fiercely. "I want to feel sure there's one creature in this here darned world that ain't all fur theirselves. Human nature is certainly hoggish, professor!"

"I'm afraid it is, Jo."

"But there's a female," twirling his thumb adroitly toward the other room, "that's only too happy because she's got an old corp like me to wait on and care fur. She says the only cloud in her sky is that some day she *won't* have me to do for! I tell you"—Jo choked a bit—"I ain't used to it. I ain't used to it at all—bein' liked and petted up jist fur

myself. I've had plenty of Jezebels after me fur my—well, fur them couple jools or what. Fur anything I had to give 'em. But put 'em to the test oncet and you'll see how much they love you! Say, prof!"

"Well, uncle?"

"You're a damn fool to miss the chancet of gittin' sich a prize as Mattie fur a wife. Take it from me."

"I guess we'd better not discuss that, Jo. Has your sister been to see you?"

Jo chuckled. "You bet you! She talked till she was clean beat out and so was I—to persuade me how much more comfortable she could make me at her house, if I'd come back and give her all the money I had by me, to use fur me. Fur me, notice!"

"'But when my money's all, oncet?' I ast her. 'What then? Heh?'"

"'Well,' says she, 'what kin Mattie do fur you when your money's all?'"

"'What money I got by me, Emmy,' I says, 'will easy outlast the few weeks I got to live.'"

"So then she pleaded very eloquent fur the chancet to minister to her dyin' brother's needs, and not have sich a cinch cheated from her by a onscroop-tilous hussy!"

"'But it wouldn't do you no good, Emmy,' I explained, 'because I got my will made a'ready, leavin' to Mattie what little I got to leave, and I can't afford to have that there will made over again. It cost me fifty dollars to have it drawn up. There's sich a little to leave her, I hated to spare them fifty out of it—but I wanted to bind Mattie up with the law, so's she couldn't give a cent of it to you—seein' how dirty you acted to me and her.'"

"Well, professor, if Emmy didn't look like a mad chicken at a chicken fight! I had to leave on I had a bad attack to shut her up—and I called in Mattie to dose me. That drove her off. She ain't showed up since. She don't even think it's worth while, after what

I tol' her, fur to fetch me over any more invalid slops. Emmy never was no cook. Now, there's Mattie"—he poked Oliver with his elbow—"she's a daisy cooker, professor!"

"But you see, Uncle Jo, there are some men who wouldn't care to marry their cooks. They'd have other uses for a wife."

"What other uses?" Jo demanded suspiciously.

"Well, some men care for companionship in a wife—and wouldn't want to see them in working clothes all the time. They'd want to see them at their ease and looking pretty."

"Mattie looks pretty, even when she's scrubbin'! But look-a-here, Mr. Oliver. It's ideas like them that gives so many immoral women. Treatin' 'em like dressed-up dolls! I ain't like the rest of these here Dutch that's fur makin' beasts of burden out of women. But it's insultin' 'em pretty near as much, I think, not to look to 'em fur anythin' that's useful or big or worth doin'. It's that that is drivin' the better women, in these days, to make sich a big kick, mister, fur their rights—their right to be taken fur somepin better'n either worthless fools or either men's slaves. And talkin' about cookin', I'm glad you come in here to-night. I got to speak somepin serious to you. I'm in trouble, and I don't know how to work round it."

"Your money going too fast? Don't worry about that. I'll see you through, Uncle Jo. I've got a little outside my salary."

Jo regarded him a shade dubiously. "Excuse me, mister, that it ain't easy fur me to believe in kindness like yourn—that seems to have nothin' to gain by bein' kind. Life has gave me so many setbacks jist when I was trustin' some damned sucker to the limit! Now I have to ast myself, 'What's his motive fur offerin' to hand acrost cash to me? He ain't got sich a bloomin' lot of it, or

be sure he wouldn't be spendin' his young life teachin' Adamstown cabbage heads! And a body's got to have *some* kind of a motive fur a deed of generosity.' That's what I have to ast myself, Mr. Oliver."

"Well, Jo, what was *your* motive when you brought a necklace for your brother-in-law's daughter whom you had never seen? Aren't you pretty swell-headed to think that you're the only man alive that can give spontaneously, or whose heart can respond to a need of his fellow man's?"

"Well, mebbly I'm a blamed fool—but I sure do believe in you, Mr. Oliver!"

"And you'll be sensible and let me help you?"

"Yes. But it ain't money I need. It's advice. And diplomacy."

"Drop a nickel in the slot," responded Oliver, making a slot of his two fingers, "and you'll get the goods."

"Professor"—Uncle Jo lowered his voice—"that girl in there is half starvin' herself to make them two hundred dollars reach; to buy me all kinds of dainties fur to temp' my appetite; to git me noospapers and magazines fur to pass the time fur me; to even buy me some hothouse carnations, now and then, to cheer me up! She is *starvin'* herself, Mr. Oliver! What shall I do about it? When I protest, she jist tries to smooth me down and says, '*That's* all right, Uncle Jo'—and then won't cook an egg fur her own breakfast, because eggs is forty cents a dozent. Now, then," concluded Jo, sinking back in his chair, "what's a body to do?"

"Do? Put a stop to it!" exclaimed Oliver. "Why, she'll undermine her health!"

The sudden anxiety that gripped him as he thought what such a course, on Mattie's part, might lead to, brought a flush to his face; and, at the same time, the realization of his own feeling about it gave him a shock of astonishment.

"Yes," said Jo, "we've got to stop it

—but *how*? That's what I want to know. How?"

"The 'how' has got to be found!" affirmed Oliver sharply.

"Silas Groff gev it away to me that she's tryin' to git some plain sewin' to do. Now, that ain't necessary!" Jo protested. "I ain't a-goin' to live long enough to make *that* necessary. And she has enough work to do takin' care of me and the house. She near had a fit when I made Silas Groff send Sally Zook round here to do the washin'. But there I took a firm stand. 'Sally Zook's to *wash* fur us,' I says—and Mattie had to give in, *whether* or no. I even handed over another hundred dollars to her, and owned up I'd been keepin' some cash back fur good whisky—but all she said was I'd *need* it fur good whisky—what I called good. And, professor, even with that exter hundred to go on, I can't see no improvement in her appetite. So now I don't know what to do no more."

"We'll have to *make* her stop starvin' herself!" Oliver frowned. "I'm glad to see she *looks* well. But she won't continue to if she keeps this thing up."

"It's her bein' so contented that makes her look so good. Oncet in a while, to be sure, she cries a little fur to see Johnny."

"Let me talk to her," Oliver suggested.

"All right!" Jo eagerly responded. "And try to convince her she don't have to skimp—I got a-plenty to last."

"I'll begin to think pretty soon, Jo, that you're fooling us all—that you're a rich old miser!"

"I only wisht I was—fur Mattie's sake," said Jo pensively. "But, unfortunately, I ain't."

Oliver rose, for he felt too troubled about the girl to sit still any longer.

He found her in the front room, darning Uncle Jo's hose by the light of



"Was yous two acquainted together, then?" "Yes," Beatrice briefly responded. "That will be all now, Mrs. Gunzenhauser."

a lamp on the center table. He drew up a chair in front of her. It was surprising how she managed, with her disabled arm, to hold the ball in the stocking she was darning.

"Uncle Jo says"—she smiled—"that he's not used to wearing darned socks, and he wants me to buy new, and not tire my eyes. But I tell him he don't talk and act much like a poor man. Our money would soon be all if I did as *he* wants me to do."

"That's what I must talk to you about, Mattie," said Oliver, in a school-master tone of voice. "I'm going to

scold you soundly! You have got to stop worrying your poor Uncle Jo."

Mattie looked all startled astonishment.

"Don't you know you'll shorten his life if you worry him by half starving yourself? And, Mattie, you lessen your usefulness to him, for if you should break down, what would become of him? And he assures me that it is not necessary that you stint yourself."

"I know he has more than I thought he had, but——"

"But you're not doing right by *him* when you let yourself run down.

You're looking thin. If you don't stop it, I'll get another nurse for him. He doesn't want a nurse that's going to give out in a week or two. Now, are you going to behave yourself?"

"All right, Mr. Oliver," she said, looking half frightened at his sternness. "I'll eat a little more, then, to satisfy Uncle Jo—and you."

"And me." He nodded. See that you do, or I shall be really angry with you. You've never seen me when I'm angry. I'm awful. I'm dangerous."

Mattie smiled.

"You think you wouldn't be afraid of me? You don't know me!"

"If I did anything to deserve your anger, I believe I *would* be afraid of you."

"Mattie"—he suddenly leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, and spoke to her earnestly—"there's a question I want to ask you."

"All right, Mr. Oliver."

"This Edward O. Potter, whose novels you seem to enjoy—I'm going to tell you what sort of a fellow he is."

"Oh, do you know him?"

"What sort of a fellow I'm *told* he is."

"Oh!" She nodded.

"And then I'll ask my question."

"All right."

Oliver cleared his throat, and began: "During the few months of the year when he's not writing, he's pretty much like other people. But when he's in the throes of working out one of his stories—Lord help us! They say he acts as if he were hypnotized. Doesn't seem to be conscious of a thing or of a human being about him. Sits at his meals without speaking to or *seeing* his—wife and children. If they speak to him, he's horribly irritated. Because, you see, he's living wholly in the characters and the atmosphere of his book. For the time being, those he loves don't exist for him. It's the only way he *can* write

—to merge his whole being in what he is creating and become oblivious of everything else. That's why his books have a certain power, Mattie. But it's a dreary life his family lead with him while he's writing. His temper, if he's annoyed or interrupted, is devilish. He'll curse any one who bothers him. Once Mrs. Potter suggested that, while writing a novel, he go away from her and the children—but, you see, he's writing during at least two-thirds of the year."

"Such a man would better not marry, I would think," said Mattie doubtfully.

"But he is, after all, like other men—he wants a home, children, something to love, to live for, some one to love *him*, too. And in his off times, when he's not working, he's said to be the best kind of a fellow. Makes his wife and children perfectly happy. Does everything in the world for them. Adores them."

"Well," said Mattie, "most men don't give their families two or three months of devotion and happiness. Most husbands are *always* silent or irritable and morose with their families. And without the excuse that this great writer has. So it seems to me that perhaps Edward O. Potter's wife is fortunate, after all. Anyway, she sacrifices herself for a man that's *worth* it."

"There's the point, Mattie! Is any man worth a fine woman's sacrificing herself for him?"

"Probably not," was her unexpected reply. "But women are so weak and foolish! They're happier in sacrificing themselves than in living for themselves."

"A lot of our modern women, however, don't seem to know that fact of feminine-psychology, if it's true, Mattie. Perhaps that's why they're so restless and discontented in their self-seeking."

"Yes, I know." Mattie nodded, look-

ing wise. "Women in these times won't take what they used to take from husbands and brothers. My father's wife"—she offered an example—"wouldn't stand what I remember my mother stood without a word. My father *dare* not treat Emmy like he treated my mother, just because he knows she wouldn't take it from him. And, indeed, Mr. Oliver, I can't help seeing it's a good thing—it's better for the *men*. Now, this Edward O. Potter, for instance——"

"Yes?" he urged, as she thoughtfully paused. "This Edward O. Potter?"

"Wouldn't he write *better* if he felt he just *had* to be unselfish toward those dependent upon him for life and happiness—his children and his wife? Wouldn't self-control and thoughtful consideration, practiced *all* the time, make his writing stronger and better? *Ought* any wife, even if her husband is a genius, to permit him to fall into such bad habits with her as you say Edward O. Potter has? Of course, I never saw a genius, so I——"

"Didn't you, Mattie?"

"Why, no, sir. Where would I ever have had the chance to?"

"They never stray out to Adamstown, do they?"

"I never heard of any straying out here."

"If one should, Mattie, and you happened to meet him in one of his lucid, normal intervals and fell in love with him—and then he should tell you how awful he *could* be—would you—do you think any sensible girl would—risk marrying him?"

Mattie, apparently quite unsuspecting, gazed at him with soft, bright eyes. "I guess," she slowly answered, "for the sake of a few months a year of great happiness, I'd be willing, for the rest of the year, to put up with what I got."

Oliver rose abruptly—his eyes burning, his face flushed.

"I'm going! If I don't go right

away, I'll—I'll kiss you! You look so darned pretty, Mattie, sitting there sewing that old sock of Uncle Jo's! Good night!"

And before the girl could reply, he literally fled. Fled from temptation; from committing an ill-considered rashness that for the rest of his life he might repent.

For a long time after the door had closed upon him, Mattie sat perfectly still, her face alternately radiant and perplexed, placid and pensive.

"I would certainly have thought," was the conclusion of her meditation, "from Mr. Potter's books, that he was not a married man. Yes"—she slowly shook her head—"I would have thought he wasn't married—yet."

But Mattie would have been quite unable to analyze or explain the instinct which told her that the author of the novels that had so deeply impressed her had never been married.

CHAPTER XXII.

The stagecoach that brought Archibald Starr to Adamstown drew up at the post office at six o'clock on Friday evening and was met by Oliver, who escorted his friend at once to the Swan, breaking it to him on the way that he was to be taken, as soon as he had cleaned up and had had his supper, to the high school to hear a young lady "lecture" on suffrage.

"Is it a joke?" inquired Starr.

The stocky breadth of his figure was greatly emphasized by contrast with Oliver's height as they walked together; and, in spite of the man's thirty-two years, his countenance expressed an almost boyish enthusiasm and eagerness toward life.

"The young lady's no joke," responded Oliver. "I can't vouch for what her lecture will be."

"One of your villagers, is she?"

"Yes—no. She's my assistant. Quite a townish young person for a village teacher."

"Does she think *you* 'quite a townish young person for a village teacher'?"

"I never asked her. But I've gathered that she rather pities and despises me. I've been told she considers me 'a very nice and worthy' young man. She couldn't go much farther, could she?"

"Pretty bad!"

"Her general attitude toward me is a sort of contemptuous tolerance."

"Toward you? A lady-killer like you? Then she's a sour old spinster, is she? You're not dragging *me* to hear her lecture! I came here to talk to you. What's your idea, anyhow? Wanting to take me to listen to a village schoolmarm on suffrage! Gosh!"

"She's young and pretty, Baldy. And darned clever!"

"And isn't in love with you?" asked Starr skeptically.

"Of course it's incredible that she should not be, but she manages to conceal it."

"Her village pride?"

"She condescends to and patronizes me as if our positions were reversed—or she a lady born and I her vassal."

"She doesn't even *suspect* that you're not what you seem?"

"On the contrary. And tries kindly to conceal her scorn of me for what I do seem. She thinks I lack ambition."

"Say, Ed"—Starr poked his elbow into Oliver—"that's a darned bully situation—the village damsel taking you for what you seem, and condescending to you. Going to write it up?"

"If I can make my public as curious as I am to know what the sequel will be when she finds me out, I'll score."

"Has she ever heard of Edward O. Potter—do you know?"

"She's read everything I've written, and raves over them all. Don't you re-

member I wrote you how she admires, also, *your* stuff?"

"Oh, yes! I believe you remarked, just now, she was 'darned clever'?"

"She thinks her appreciation of my novels proves it. She despises my taste because I told her I didn't read them when I could find anything else to read."

"Are you in love with her?"

Oliver hesitated a perceptible instant. "She's a little spitfire, Baldy!"

"When they're clever and pretty, I rather like them to be a bit devilish, Ed. Miss Beatrice Ford," said Baldy pensively, "is something of a spitfire."

"You look as sentimental over it as if you were saying she had soulful, starry eyes and a sylphlike form!"

"I wish she'd come home from Europe!" Starr mourned, with a stentorian sigh.

"Much good it would do *you*! An heiress like that isn't going to be allowed to take up with a mere artist."

"When he's both a gentleman and a genius?"

"A pork packer or a millionaire inventor of a new breakfast cereal will be more in her line."

"Not if *she's* got anything to say to it!"

"She won't have."

"Aha! You don't know *her*! I do!"

"You're darned cocky about it, aren't you?"

They stopped, here, at the door of the Swan.

"Don't be long cleaning up and having your supper," Oliver urged. "I'll call for you in an hour."

"Oh, but say, Ed, you're not really going to drag me to hear a suffrage lecture?"

"Baldy, I hate to, but she'd never forgive me if I didn't come. It would hurt her feelings, I'm afraid. And I *promised* to bring you—I had to—she held me up until I did. You won't be bored, really. She's cute."

"Oh, well!" Baldy resigned himself, with a shrug.

"And when I present you afterward, take care not to give me away—or yourself, either. Your name is Pitzer Yutzy."

"She can't be so very clever if she swallows that!"

"That's mild compared to some of the names about here—and she thinks you're from Lancaster. Permillia Hogentogger is one of the choice ones; and Elypholate Yingst."

"Write my name out for me—I'll have to keep it by me," said Starr.

Beatrice, in her absorbing preparations for her suffrage talk, had forgotten all about Mr. Oliver's friend who was coming from Lancaster on the Friday evening stage and would stop at the Swan. Nor did she recall the fact when, seated at her solitary supper in the hotel dining room at half past six—all the other boarders having consumed their food with businesslike dispatch and departed at least ten minutes ago and no one being with her now except the landlady, who waited upon her—a stranger walked into the room alone, a stockily built man with a wonderful crop of thick, black, curly hair, a flowing Windsor tie, a domelike forehead, and fine dark eyes.

One careless glance at the stranger—a violent start of amazement—and Beatrice, her face flaming, her heart thumping, quickly jerked her chair about so that her back was toward the room, her face to the wall.

The stranger, on his part, not noticing the solitary diner in the corner, took the place pointed out to him by the landlady, at one of the two long tables of the room, and inspected the weird supper spread before him—"ponhaus," "scalded cheese," "smearcase," and, fortunately, a few familiar dishes like fried potatoes, cold slaw, fried ham, pie, cake, stewed prunes.

Beatrice, while she hastily finished her supper, marveled as to what mysterious coincidence had brought Archibald Starr *here*, of all places! Was it possible that knowledge of her hiding place had leaked out, and that he had come to see *her*? No, her secret had been too carefully guarded; her parents were most anxious to conceal the "ridiculous truth" about her, and they were the only two people who knew where she was. Anyway, she and Mr. Starr had met only once, and though they had been greatly attracted to each other—at least she had liked *him* exceedingly, and they *had* come into very sympathetic touch that night of her great party—yet she could hardly believe that the artist's interest in her—

But, then, why was he here?

There was suddenly a clatter behind her of a knife and fork dropped upon a plate, the noisy scraping of a chair abruptly pushed back from the table, and the sound of a heavy step striding toward her. She almost cowered over her plate as he stopped beside her chair.

"My God! It is she! I must be dreaming!"

Beatrice, looking pale and almost frightened, lifted her face and held out her hand.

"No, you're not dreaming," she admitted doggedly.

"Aren't you in Europe?" he demanded, his voice quivering with joy, his broad countenance radiating the sudden happiness that flooded his heart at the unexpected sight of this maiden who had lived in his soul night and day ever since the hour he had met her.

"No, I'm in Adamstown," she reluctantly confessed. "Bring your dinner to my table and tell me how you happen to be here? You evidently didn't follow *me*?"

"Not that I *wouldn't* follow you even to Adamstown!" exclaimed Starr, still holding her hand, unmindful of his cooling dinner at the other table.



The two men waited while Beatrice announced to her diminutive audience that her lecture would be postponed until the evangelist had left her a clear field.

"Mrs. Gunzenhauser"—Beatrice addressed the landlady—"will you be so good as to bring this gentleman's dinner to my table? Sit down," she admonished the beaming gentleman, drawing away her hand and motioning him to the other chair at her table.

The landlady, while she piled the stranger's dinner upon her tray and bore it across the room, looked grimly disapproving. This was the second

time this week that Miss Jenkins had had a gentleman alone with her at her own table—and this one a strange traveling man upon whom the teacher had first turned her back and then—contrary piece that she was—asked him to "eat" with her!

"She must be sich a flirt or whatever!" Mrs. Gunzenhauser darkly opined. "She better watch out, or the directors will soon tell her she darsent

carry on so bold with the menfolks around a *hotel*, yet!"

As she placed Mr. Starr's dinner before him, she put out a feeler. "Was yous two acquainted together, then?"

"Yes," Beatrice briefly responded. "That will be all now, Mrs. Gunzenhauser. We shan't need to keep you here any longer."

Mrs. Gunzenhauser set her thin lips as she took up her tray and walked from the room. She wasn't used to being dismissed from her own dining room.

"Now, then," Beatrice eagerly asked, "what on earth does bring you here? No one ever comes here but traveling salesmen. You haven't given up art and turned drummer, have you?"

"It's a most commonplace occasion that brings *me* here," he returned, with an evasiveness that she instantly detected. "Let's hear, rather, the romantically mysterious story of *your* retirement from the haunts of men to the wilds of Adamstown. I was never more astonished in my life! All New York thinks you're in England. Your mother *says* you are. Does she *think* you are? Does she know where you *are*? Whom and what are you hiding from? Not from me, I suppose?—since I have heroically repressed my wild impulses to pursue you to the ends of the earth."

"No, I'm not hiding from you. I'm not going to tell you, just yet, why I *am* here."

"Have you been exiled here long? In a place like this—*you*!"

"Since the tenth of last September."

"Nearly two months! I hadn't heard of your robbing a bank."

"*What* is the 'commonplace occasion' that brings you to these shores?" she persisted.

Starr paused a perceptible instant, then glibly replied: "I came to hear a suffrage lecture to-night by a village teacher here. You see I'm very strong

for suffrage—yes—and I think the hope for the cause lies in the winning of the big rural vote."

"But how had you heard, in New York City, of a suffrage lecture to be given in Adamstown?"

"Well, you see, I happened to be in Lancaster, and I met there, the other day, the high-school principal, and *he* told me."

"Oh! And the lecturer is 'a village teacher,' you say?"

"Yes, and the description I had of her from the high-school principal—I happened to meet him in Lancaster, I believe I remarked—made me want to hear her."

"His description was so alluring?" Beatrice inquired, with an elaborate indifference.

"Said she was young, pretty, and 'darned clever'—his vulgar village way of putting it, you know—and that she was such a little spitfire, and was sure she would give us a lively lecture, and that I certainly wouldn't be bored."

"Well, upon my word!"

"Oh, I'd gladly travel farther than from Lancaster to Adamstown to hear a spicy talk on suffrage delivered by a pretty young woman! I'm greatly interested in—in feminism!"

"That is, in pretty young women."

"Exactly! Anyway, I shan't waste an evening on a bloomin' suffrage lecture now I've discovered *you*!"

Beatrice gazed at him earnestly.

"Then you know our high-school principal, Mr. Oliver?" she asked.

"Mr.—Oliver, yes. Slightly. 'Our high-school principal'? You've adopted the town, then?"

"Temporarily. It's odd Mr. Oliver didn't tell me he had met you, Mr. Starr, since he knows how I admire you—your work," she amended.

"Then you've met Mr. Oliver?"

"Oh, yes."

"He sees you often?" Starr demanded jealously.

"Often, yes. He never mentioned having met you."

"You see, he's a modest fellow. He probably feared you'd think he was bragging."

"You're not overwhelmingly modest, anyway! Oh!" she suddenly exclaimed.

"What?"

"He did tell me he expected a friend to spend the week-end with him! Aha! Are you Mr. Pitzer Yutzy?"

"Well, you see," he confessed, with a little laugh, "as I didn't want to be met at the station by the Adamstown brass band, I told Mr.—Oliver not to give it out *who* was coming."

"No one in Adamstown but Mr. Oliver and me ever heard of you—and I wouldn't have met you with a brass band."

"I'm not really used to it, either," he admitted.

"Mr. Starr!"

"Miss Ford?"

"I am known here as Miss Jenkins. Jenkins is really my name. I don't wish it known in New York that I'm here—and I don't want it known here who I am. You will guard my secret?"

"Yours to command, Miss Ford—Jenkins."

"Yes, call me Miss Jenkins. I am especially anxious to conceal my identity from Mr. Oliver."

"Then he doesn't *know* who you are?" exclaimed Starr. "And I am wasting my secret rage at him for not *telling* me you were here?"

"He knows me only as Miss Jenkins. I am his assistant in the high school."

"*You!* Oliver's assistant! And he doesn't know——" Starr looked apologetic as he took it in.

"How could he suspect me? No one knows I am here except my parents."

Starr stared for an instant, his eyes bulging. Then he roared. He simply bellowed with laughter.

"But," argued Beatrice, scarcely smiling at the situation, "it wouldn't greatly impress him if he did know. Naturally a country school-teacher knows nothing about the Fords except the lies he's gleaned from a Sunday newspaper."

"Of course," Starr conceded, "he's merely a country teacher. But, do you know, he seemed to me, when I met him in Lancaster, to be quite a gentleman?"

"He is awfully nice," Beatrice agreed.

"Don't you find him a bit unusual for a country school-teacher?"

"Yes, I do."

"I shall certainly have to keep my wits about me to remember not to give you away, Miss Ford. I'm so glad I decided to come to Adamstown!"

"To hear me lecture?"

"*You* lecture! But, of course! Oliver did say it was his assistant who would talk."

"And that she was a little spitfire?"

Starr flushed crimson with embarrassment. "But," he stammered, "he said it most—respectfully and admiringly, Miss Jenkins."

"Are you coming to hear me lecture?"

"I'd like to see anything keep me away!"

"But I'm not sure I've the courage to talk before you."

"If you can talk before Oliver?"

"He's not a man of world renown."

"Well, to be sure——"

"Yes?"

"Or course, he's only a village teacher—but a very clever one."

"And you an artist of international reputation!"

"Have you found this Mr. Oliver at all—well, interesting?"

"Quite so—for a country teacher."

"*Why* are you teaching out here, Miss Ford? I'm burning to know."

"I'll reveal all while you 'see me

safe home'—as they say here—from the suffrage meeting."

There was a step in the hall outside the dining-room door which brought Starr suddenly to his feet.

"It's Oliver come to take me to the lecture," he whispered hastily. "He mustn't see that we know each other!"

"No!" Beatrice hastily whispered back.

When Oliver opened the door and came in, Mr. Starr was walking toward him from the other side of the room.

Oliver led him over to the little table in the corner.

"Miss Jenkins, may I present my friend, Mr. Yutzy?"

"Mr. Yutzy," Beatrice responded, as she rose and bowed ceremoniously.

"Miss Jenkins." Starr profoundly returned her salutation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A rival attraction at the Evangelical Church, at which an evangelist was conducting an orgy known as a revival, left the village cold to the lure of a suffrage lecture; Beatrice's audience at the high school, in addition to the two distinguished men who sat at her feet, consisted of a few of her pupils and three old women who lived near the school and were too feeble to get across the village to the revival.

So she did not deliver her lecture.

"Didn't I tell you she was pretty and cute?" Oliver nudged Starr to inquire, as the two men waited in the back of the schoolroom while Beatrice announced to her diminutive audience that her lecture would be postponed until the evangelist had left her a clear field.

"Oh, she'll pass," Starr granted.

"You're so full of that Ford girl, you can't see anything in any one else."

"On the contrary, Ed, I think this assistant of yours is quite as good looking as Miss Ford."

"I bet you she's a darned sight prettier!"

"I'm not sure but she is," Starr amiably conceded, for he was certain Beatrice had never looked lovelier than she did to-night.

"I'll show you a girl, Baldy, that you'll want to paint! A regular Madonna type!"

"The Madonna type isn't modern. She *is*," he affirmed, nodding toward the platform. "An intelligent, efficient, self-dependent young woman; man's *mate*, not his dependent."

"Maybe I'm old-fashioned, Baldy. Maybe I like the clinging-vine type. I suspect I'm even medieval enough to enjoy the idea of petting a wife and spoiling her."

"Petting and spoiling her—yes, when you were sober. When drunk with one of your 'themes,' you'd bully her round to the limit. Yes, you would—you know you would!"

"I probably should, poor thing! But fancy petting *that* little vixen!" with a nod of his head toward the platform.

"I'd like the chance to! I shouldn't have any trouble doing it, if she'd let me."

"If she'd 'let' you—that's the point! She'd stick out all her prickles in self-defense."

"Yes, but when that kind does fall in love!" said Starr feelingly.

It was during Beatrice's walk back to the hotel, escorted by both Oliver and Starr, that she began to suspect, to her very great astonishment, an intimacy between these two men.

Starr's exuberant attentions to Miss Jenkins, his irrepressible joyousness in her presence, gave Oliver something of a shock.

"He must be losing his head," he thought wonderingly.

Once, when for a moment Starr forgot himself so far as to address her as "Miss Ford," Oliver pulled him up short.

"If you had not dined at the Swan, I'd think you'd been having a champagne dinner! You've got that Miss Ford on the brain so bad——"

"Shut up!"

"Well, don't forget who it is you *are* in love with—if you know!"

"Mr. Yutzy has taken you into his confidence, has he, Mr. Oliver?" Beatrice calmly inquired.

"Whenever I'll listen to him, Miss Jenkins, he slops over quite disgustingly about a girl he met *just once* at, I think, a moving-picture show; and he's so moonstruck about her, he's losing weight. You really have gone off, Pitzer, since I saw you last."

"Oh, I understood from Mr. Yutzy that he and you had met for the first time only a few days ago in Lancaster!"

"Yes; and ever since he's been going on to me like a loon," Oliver hastily retorted, inwardly damning Starr for thus tangling things up without first consulting with him, "about this Lancaster lady, Miss Ford or Fordney or something—— Say, Pitzer!"

"Well, you goat?"

"What is the lady's name that you're in love with?"

"Miss Beatrice Ford, of New York."

"It's you that's a goat!" growled Oliver, wondering what could possess the man to so risk betraying them both. The idea of Mr. Pitzer Yutzy, of Lancaster, vaunting an acquaintance with Miss Beatrice Ford! "I'm genuinely disappointed, Miss Jenkins," Oliver quickly added, "that we didn't hear you talk to-night."

Beatrice, looking thoughtful, walked between them with downcast eyes.

When they reached the hotel, Starr had a hard time getting rid of Oliver, who, of course, expected his visitor to go with him to his room for a long talk over their pipes. But Starr pleaded fatigue, headache, and all manner of excuses.

"Well, then, if you won't come with me," Oliver at last adapted himself to the artist's whim, "I'll go up to your room with you."

"No, you won't. I don't want you. I want to be alone. I'm sleepy. I want to go to bed."

Oliver looked him over critically. "Well," he said, "I never stay where I'm not wanted; I always was proud and sensitive. It looks to me, Miss Jenkins, very much as if he were trying to shake me because he wants to 'set up and keep comp'ny' with you! I wouldn't have thought it of my friend, Mr. Yutzy! To be sure, he doesn't know what he's letting himself in for. I wouldn't have the temerity to flirt with you. I apologize for him, Miss Jenkins, and I leave him to your tender mercy—which I myself have never found really tender."

But when he departed, leaving Beatrice and Starr alone in the hotel parlor, he found himself feeling remarkably "blue."

For consolation, he walked down to see how Uncle Jo and Mattie were coming on.

Meantime, the other two, as soon as Oliver was out of sight, strolled out into the moonlit woods that skirted the village—and here Beatrice gave to Archibald Starr a full and clear explanation of her presence in Adamstown as Mr. Oliver's assistant in the high school.

"No really good position is open to a perfectly inexperienced teacher. So I had to take for my first venture anything I could get. And," she concluded, "I have concealed my identity—to spare mother's feelings—and my own, too, for that matter."

"I can't tell you," said Starr joyously, "how happy you make me when you tell me you were not content 'with that station in life to which it pleased God to call you.' To have you join

the army of workers brings you so much nearer my level."

"The finer, more serious women of our day," said Beatrice, in her college-graduate tone of voice, "are all coming to feel that to give the best years of their youth to mere social dissipation, which isn't in itself satisfying, and which leads nowhere—except possibly to an equally unsatisfying marriage—is unworthy of them."

"It has always seemed to me," responded Starr, "that the place the fashionable woman occupies in the social economy is supremely absurd."

"I'm glad you don't think me eccentric. I'm afraid I always was what conventional people call a bit of a freak. At fourteen, I used to lament that I was not, as all my girl friends were, boy crazy. Youth hates to be 'different,' you know. But I *couldn't* be interested in or romantic over boys. How I respected and envied the girls who could!"

"But surely boys were 'crazy' about you?"

"Those who were soon dropped me. I was too 'slow'—a stick. I was shy with them—you look incredulous, but I was—because I was so painfully conscious of my inability to interest or amuse them. And when I grew up, I had the same experience with men. I was never popular until——"

"Well? Until?" Starr urged, as she paused.

"Until I learned to conceal from them that I had brains."

"You never concealed it from *me*."

"Because you were the first man I had ever met that I didn't have to talk down to. It was a relief!"

"And to *me* a relief to meet a woman I could treat as an equal."

"Since I *had* to go into society," said Beatrice, "I taught myself a maxim for popularity: *Masculine egotism won't suffer intellectual superiority in a woman*. So I learned to pretend to be

interested in, and even to respect and admire, their commonplace ideas. I'd ask them earnestly their opinions on big questions, and take their shallow, ridiculous answers as seriously as *they* took them—and I was a brilliant social success! They adored me. But I couldn't keep it up—I *couldn't*! It palled awfully! I longed so to be myself—to give out my real, true heart and mind where I shouldn't be shunned and hated for it."

"So," said Starr facetiously, "when you met a really great man?"

"I did not promptly fall in love with him!"

"If you weren't so damnably rich, I'd propose to you *to-night*!"

"I tell you it isn't my money, but my brains, that have stood in the way of my loving and being loved."

"I don't mind your brains—so long as you're not *quite* so clever as I am."

"How do you know I'm not just pretending to be a shade less clever than you? I missed my mark once"—she smiled—"when I wanted to make myself agreeable and popular with a certain novelist——"

"Eh? Who?"

"That absurd creature—I really forget his name——"

"Was it Edward O. Potter?"

"As if I could forget *his* name! James O'Neal—that's the man. You know what a vogue he had—so much so that mother asked him to dine with us once. I sat next to him at dinner, and to make him adore me, I told him how I liked his humor—only to learn later that he utterly despises his own stuff—writes it solely to earn a living, and, as he had begun to recognize that I was bright, he was greatly disappointed in me to find me so commonplace as to admire his stories, and, of all things, his 'humor'—lucrative though it was. After hearing that I admired him, he promptly ceased to



Uncle Jo, too, appeared impressed with the spectacle of those two—Johnny and Mattie—clinging together so passionately after these days of separation.

be interested in me. But, of course, he was a remarkable exception."

"Couldn't you have explained his mistake to him?"

"Explain to a man that when I said I admired his humor, I was sarcastic?"

"You couldn't," Starr admitted, shaking his head.

"So to this day he thinks me a fool."

"Er—is James O'Neal the only novelist you ever met?"

"Yes. Some time won't you give me an opportunity to meet Edward O. Potter?"

"Charmed to. But you wouldn't like him."

"Why?"

"From pure cussedness—if I know you—because all the other women fall in love with him. Now, I'm a man that women, as a rule, don't care for overwhelmingly. Anyway, I'm never both-

ered with their running after me—as Ed Potter is.”

“Mother repeatedly tried in vain to get Mr. Potter for a dinner or a tea. I was always crazy to meet him.”

“Humph!” grunted Starr.

“Well, why shouldn’t I be crazy to meet a man that writes as he does?”

“You’d find him disappointing.”

“He doesn’t give people a chance to find him anything! He even sent regrets for my debutante party. Does he shun society?”

“He loves our bohemian literary and artistic crowd. He cares nothing for the conventions. Likes to do as he damn pleases, you know—I *beg* your pardon!”

“What for?”

“For,” said Starr meekly, “saying ‘damn’ in your presence.”

“If we were married, do you mean to tell me you’d never say ‘damn’ in my presence?”

“I’d *try* not to forget myself.”

“Then I decline the honor of your proposal. Anything so tame as a man who would ever let me hear him say — Well, if *you* didn’t liven things up, I’d say it occasionally!”

“Lovely—I mean awful!”

“And I know I *should* like Edward O. Potter—a man that hates the conventions and likes to do as he damn pleases.”

“See?” exclaimed Starr accusingly. “If I present him to you, you’ll go and marry him! He’s after marrying money, anyway.”

“Oh, that’s what Mr. Oliver says he heard of him,” cried Beatrice mournfully.

“He did, did he? What does *he* know of Ed Potter?”

“Mr. Starr,” Beatrice abruptly challenged him, “you’ve known Mr. Oliver a long time?”

“A little while—yes.”

“Why, then, did you tell me that you’d just met him in Lancaster?”

“Did I? Well, I’ll tell you. You see, Oliver’s a little mortified at being so down on his luck as to have to teach out here.”

“He’s always seemed to me quite satisfied with his lot.”

“But you see,” Starr improvised, “he expected his aunt to leave him her fortune. He had lived for years on that expectation—”

“How unmanly!”

“Wasn’t it?” said Starr, perfectly willing to damage Oliver’s chances with Beatrice, since he was sure that he himself would have no case at all in a fair fight against a rival so formidable. “All’s fair in love, anyway,” he told himself, “and Ed couldn’t make her happy—he’s too temperamental.”

“And when Oliver’s aunt left her money to charity,” he continued to invent his explanation, “he felt so cheap—and was so bankrupt, that there wasn’t anything left for him to do but teach school. He’s right well educated.”

“Then he hasn’t always taught?”

“Well, not always; no.”

“And since he’s a friend of yours, he really is somebody, is he?”

“Well, yes; you might say he is.”

“*Who* is he?”

“Well, rather a gentleman, really.”

“I noticed he had unusual things in his room at Mrs. Miller’s.”

“His room?”

“It’s a gentleman’s room,” pronounced Beatrice.

“You’re in the habit of calling on him at his rooms?”

“It’s my favorite pastime in Adams-town! Mr. Starr, you are noncommittal about this Mr. Oliver!”

“Oh, no, I’m not! It’s only that he’s so sensitive about his aunt’s disappointing him, you see, that he shrinks from society, from being known. There’s nothing left, now, for the poor fellow to do but marry money. He’s on the lookout. (‘I’ve fixed *him* with her!’”

he inwardly chuckled at his own cleverness.)

"On the lookout for a rich wife!" repeated Beatrice, scandalized.

"Yes," admitted Starr reluctantly. "Isn't it contemptible?"

"But Mr. Oliver isn't contemptible! You're not being candid with me—you're trying to tease me!"

"Don't tell me you *care* whether he's contemptible or noble!" cried Starr tragically.

"Of course I care. I like and admire him. I should hate to think he was the sort of cad that would live on his wife's fortune."

"Well, you see, having always counted on his aunt's legacy— Oh, bother! Let's talk about something else! Let's talk about *you*!"

"No, about you. What did you come to Adamstown for?"

"Whatever I may have come for, I'm here now to see you."

"What did you come for?" she insisted.

"To discover you accidentally, and talk over with you my going to Paris to study portrait painting."

"Oh," exclaimed Beatrice, "what a coincidence! I had just about made up my mind to go over to the Sorbonne to specialize in French literature and history."

"We'll go together!" Starr cried enthusiastically, almost leaping in the moonlit path through which they were strolling.

"If you mean that for a proposal, Mr. Starr, I again refuse you."

"I'll keep on proposing until from weariness you accept me! We'll go together to Paris," he reaffirmed.

"What will Edward O. Potter do for an illustrator?" Beatrice wondered. "I shall miss your illustrations in his novels—though I'm glad you're looking higher."

"Potter be—blessed! Let's talk of our life together in France."

"If you can't be sane," Beatrice reproved him, "we'll go back to the Swan."

CHAPTER XXIV.

All day Saturday, Starr continued to elude and dodge Oliver. In the morning he and Beatrice took a long tramp about the country, and in the afternoon a drive, in a high, old-fashioned buggy, to the famous, quaint "brotherhood" home at Ephrata. It was late at night when they returned.

On Sunday morning, Oliver, remaining in bed until noon, was informed, when at length he did call at the Swan, that Mr. Yutzy and Miss Jenkins were again "out on the buggy."

He was puzzled. He had never before known Baldy to "go it" at such a pace as this with a girl he didn't know. Baldy didn't really care especially for girls. To be sure, Miss Jenkins was unusual. She wasn't a fool. She was worth while. She kept you livened up. But surely Baldy had manifested symptoms, serious symptoms, of being hit by the Ford girl very hard indeed.

"He must be getting maudlin," Oliver growled, not at all pleased at being neglected, slighted, shunned, for a mere girl whom his friend had only just met.

But while he wondered at Starr, he also wondered at Miss Jenkins herself.

"Who would have supposed she was such a flirt—to take up with a strange man and go about the country with him alone at this rapid pace? She's always held me off far enough! She must be *working* Baldy, for nothing else would make him hang round her the way he's doing. It's not like him. And I certainly would not have thought she would be so free and easy! Can it be possible that he has let out to her who he is? It's rather undignified of her, the way she's going it!"

Again, to console himself, he went to see Uncle Jo and Mattie, this time

stealing Johnny and taking him with him. For the boy did not cease to fret for his sister and was beginning to look pale and pinched under the stress of his pining for her.

"There's something really fine in the little lad," Oliver had concluded, as he had observed these signs of the child's deep feeling. "Most of these Pennsylvania-Dutch children are so entirely phlegmatic."

He had noticed how the children of the village so lacked not only sensitiveness, but the imagination natural to childhood, that they did not even play, but would sit about by the hour doing nothing. This seemed the more astonishing to him by contrast with the two children he knew best—his sister's irrepressible boy and girl, who had to be provided with entertainment between courses at the table to keep them from beginning to build fairy castles or railroad tracks with the dishes, knives, and forks.

When, on that Sunday afternoon, Johnny once more found himself in his sister's arms, the mute passion with which he clung to her, Mattie's motherly brooding over him, her joy at seeing him again, tinged with the pain of their ultimate separation, was a spectacle upon which Oliver looked with a deeper stirring of his own emotions than he trusted himself to admit even to his own consciousness.

What he did realize was a feeling he was ashamed of—a sense of pique that her absorption in the boy made her, apparently, oblivious of himself. She did not even remember, in her shock of delight at seeing the child, to greet Oliver at all—did not let him, for a pleasant moment, hold her hand in his; an experience evidently not nearly so appealing to her as was the clasping of this boy to her bosom. Why, he could leave the room and slip out of the house, just now, and she would never miss him! He felt distinctly chagrined

—while at the same time he knew, deep down in his soul, that he would have been disappointed in Mattie if she had shown a shade less feeling for her little brother.

Uncle Jo, too, appeared impressed with the spectacle of those two—Johnny and Mattie—clinging together so passionately after these days of separation.

"Hi, professor!" he exclaimed, when Oliver strolled over to his bedside to shake hands with him—for he was now almost entirely confined to bed. "I got an idea!"

Oliver could not have told by just what subtlety it was conveyed to him that there was a vital connection between this statement and the little drama at the other end of the room.

"Yes, professor," Jo repeated excitedly, "I got an idea!"

"Fortunate man! I wish I had!"

"I'll pass it on to you—though not in its full size. You couldn't hold it all at once—you'll have to take it gradual. Here's the first installment—I want fur you to telephone to that there Lancaster attorney, if you can handy, and tell him to git out here as soon as he otherwise kin. I want to make sich a codikle to that there will of mine."

"But that's rather an expensive 'idea,' Uncle Jo. If you don't watch out, your lawyer's fees will eat up all you've got to leave to Mattie."

"Don't you worry, prof! I've got a lot more forethought that way than you might think fur. Will you do me the favor? Say," he added earnestly, "it's some important. I seen something here to-day"—he nodded toward the oblivious pair in the corner of the room—"that give me an idea—the idea that I ain't passin' over to you, professor, just yet a while! Will you send fur the attorney over, then?" he repeated, with feverish anxiety.

"If you're sure it's for the best—for Mattie's best—of course I will!"

And now, at last, Mattie recognized his existence. Having put Johnny down with a plate of cookies and a picture book, she came to him with an anxious inquiry.

"Aren't you afraid, Mr. Oliver, that your doing me this kindness—bringing Johnny to see me—will get you into trouble?"

"How, Mattie?"

"If Emmy and father get cross at you?" she said dubiously.

"But, my dear child, their being 'cross' at me—I'd take it for a compliment."

"Well, of course I know Emmy wouldn't ask you to leave—she's so proud to have you stopping at her place. And she likes so well to get the board money!"

"And I don't intend to leave. I intend stopping just where I am, and I'll bring Johnny to see you whenever I get a chance to—on one condition."

"I'll promise you anything," Mattie smiled.

"Not to forget to shake hands with me when I come again."

"Oh, did I forget to? I didn't mean to be so impolite! But, Mr. Oliver"—her face turned grave again—"if Emmy got cross at you for bringing Johnny here, she might make father talk against you to the school board. And there's so many things already that the board don't like about you, they'd listen to him."

"What poor taste that board must have, don't you think so, Mattie? What don't they like about me?"

"They think you're too genteel, Mr. Oliver."

"But I thought they had learned to respect me since I licked Sam Dietz."

"You see, they think you must be proud, if you're so genteel."

"If they only knew how humble and modest I really am!"

Mattie considered him doubtfully. "I never noticed that you were humble. I never liked humble men."

"You think me proud, then, Mattie?"

"Well, not just to say proud. You're too high above us to feel proud toward us. That would be to you like feeling proud toward dogs and cows. You seem to me," she said thoughtfully, "as if you were a great person looking on at a little show."

Oliver gazed into the girl's clear eyes with an uncanny sense of being perfectly transparent to her. How strangely perspicacious she always was, anyway about him!

"You shouldn't say 'us,' Mattie. *You're* not one of the dogs and cows of the 'little show'!"

"I don't want the directors to put you out, Mr. Oliver," she repeated anxiously.

"They couldn't before the end of the term, you know," Oliver told her, resisting a temptation to pat her cheek reassuringly. *Why* should he refrain from such a spontaneous expression of his liking for her? She was surely too unsophisticated to be offended by it. On the contrary, she would probably be pleased to be fondled by him. Then why deny himself the pleasure? Well, there was something about Mattie—an innocence, an innate dignity—that somehow checked the bare idea of a familiarity—inexperienced little country girl though she was. He knew in his heart that it would be just as impossible to take a liberty with her as with his fiery little assistant at the high school. And he suddenly discovered, in that moment, that he rejoiced in the fact.

When, presently, he led Johnny home, he instructed the boy that if he wished again to be taken to see his sister, his visit to her to-day must remain a secret between them; and the child understood, and promised not to tell. If this

was teaching him to deceive his mother, Oliver felt it was not so bad as letting him pine for Mattie, who met a need of his little soul that no one else in his world could fill—the boy being of a mold so much finer than that of his father and mother that they could not possibly understand him.

Mrs. Miller was waiting for them on the front porch when they got home.

"I was some worried where you was, Johnny! Was you out walkin', then, with Mr. Oliver?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Johnny noncommittally.

"Where to?"

"Up the road a piece ways."

"Did yous go far?"

Oliver detected the half-veiled gleam of suspicion in her pale eyes.

"Not just so wery," answered Johnny, stoutly on his guard, to Oliver's amusement.

"Did yous stop anywheres?"

"At the drug store fur some chocolate," the boy glibly replied, displaying a strip of milk chocolate.

"Anywheres else?"

Johnny paused. The Pennsylvania Dutch are a truthful race.

"Johnny"—Oliver came to his rescue—"you're a diplomat! Mrs. Miller, you've got a son you'll be proud of some day."

"Yes, I hope, anyhow. It's kind of you, Mr. Oliver, to take him out walkin'. Was yous a bad boy, Johnny, when you was along?"

"No, ma'am."

"Wasn't he bad fur you?" she appealed to Oliver.

"No—no, indeed."

"Well, I'm glad if you say he wasn't bad. It goes a good bit till a boy calls it bad, ain't?"

"Oh, but Johnny and I are such good chums, he's never bad with me."

"But if you'd uv tol' me you was takin' him along, I'd uv put on his other

clo'es and combed him. He ain't combed yet to-day."

"But I'm not proud, Mrs. Miller, I assure you, though there are those who say I am."

"But you ain't. I always tell folks, 'He makes hisself wonderful nice and common, that way, at our place.' But they won't hardly believe it. Because, you see, you look so tony and have sich dudish manners to them high-school girls. Why, it's put out how you even stepped off the platform to pick up Susy Hohenheimer's handkerchief when she left it fall. It near give Susy fits, she's so gone on you. They say Susy says she won't never have that there handkerchief washed! Yes, she wears it in her boosom, yet, they say! Then, the next day she up and dropped her pencil on purpose right in front of you, and when Sam Dietz—tryin' to git in with Susy by mimickin' you—hurried ahead of you to pick it up and give it to her, my, but she had mad at him! They say she called him an old copy-cat right to his face! To be sure, Sam, he ain't used to them ways, neither; he was only practicin' 'em to git in with Susy, seein' she's so much fur you."

When Oliver escaped from this avalanche and went forth again to try his luck in getting hold of his friend, the hour had come for Starr to take his train back to town. So Oliver found him at last, satchel in hand, paying his bill to the proprietor of the Swan.

"I've enjoyed your visit immensely, Baldy!"

"Thanks. I'll come again next Friday."

"You needn't—so far as I'm concerned."

"Oh, I shan't mind you."

"What's got into you? What's become of your grand passion for the Ford girl?"

"I love her as much as I ever did."

"I never thought you fickle in your

fancies. Rather too constant, too persistent."

"Admirable characteristics, surely," retorted Starr, "and much more likely to make for a wife's happiness than your fickle habit of one a year or so. Say, Ed, how have you managed to keep from falling in love with your—er—assistant?"

"I didn't hear myself say I had avoided it."

Baldy looked dejected. "But say, Ed, she's not in love with you."

"Did she tell you so?"

"She didn't have to. Do you suppose I wouldn't sense it if she were? So you might as well not cherish any futile hopes. I've done all I could to enlighten her as to what kind of a husband I think you'd be."

"Look here, Baldy, you look and sound as if you really were— Well, for goodness' sake don't make a fool of yourself about a girl of whom you know absolutely nothing; about whom I know nothing, though I'm in daily association with her. I can't find out anything about her. She's *secretive* about herself. What's more, there are a lot of mighty queer things about her, Baldy, I'm sorry to tell you. It's even

occurred to me that if she hasn't a 'past,' she's at least having a present! And the very improper way she's been carrying on with you the last two days—I'm not sure but that I quite seriously disapprove of such a frivolous example being set to the young girls of my school."

"See Margaret Sangster's 'Gentle, Heartfelt Talks With the Young Girl,'" said Starr feelingly.

"If your train were not due," persisted Oliver doggedly, "I could tell you a thing or two. Look at that sable coat she wears—"

Starr guffawed. "Your insinuations, Ed, ought to call from me a challenge. But I don't care what you think of her—with her sable coat and what not—if only you don't go and make her fall in love with you!"

They parted with every outward sign of friendship, but with a mutual, secret, deep distrust. Friendship between men cannot stand before the advance of the love of woman.

Before Oliver returned to his room, he remembered Uncle Jo's request, and telephoned to the Lancaster lawyer, asking him to come out to Adamstown the next day without fail.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE FEBRUARY NUMBER.



The Wonderful Modern Girls

DISCUSSION was animated as to why men are slower to marry now than they used to be.

Colonel Franklin P. Morgan, of New York in particular, and the world of Society in general, gave the answer.

"These modern girls terrify the average man," he said solemnly. "You can't figure them out. They are mysteries. They are marvels. They are everything. They fascinate. They charm. They astound. They terrify. Look at them! How can a mere man hope to understand them? Above all, how can he delude himself into believing that he can make them happy? Consider what they are. They pass by us in bewildering procession with their Isolde smiles, their Aspasia gowns, their Helen-of-Troy hair, their Cleopatra sandals, their Pompadour brains, their Mary-Queen-of-Scots eyes, and their St.-Cecelia souls. That's enough to scare the probable wooer into his grave!"



The Christmas Guest

By Lily A. Long

Author of "The Prodigal Son's Mother," "When Half-Gods Go," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAROLD THOMAS DENISON

H OUGHTON first saw the man looking in at a patisserie shop.

People were hurrying in to buy the Christmas cakes displayed in the window, and going laden away into the deepening twilight. For the most part, the crowd was in a gay and holiday mood, ready with smiles, though they might be tired, and with greetings, though they might be trite. But the man in the shabby coat did not look like a holiday shopper. He seemed to shrink from observation, yet he lingered before the tempting window. It was an attitude that needed no interpretation to be understood.

Houghton was elderly and thin, with a stoop in his shoulders that told plainly of long years over an office desk, but his eye was the alivest thing you ever saw. It was a bubbling pool of life. Not always an observant eye, perhaps, yet Houghton saw more than people sometimes realized. When he had reached the end of the block, he turned and looked back. The man was still standing in the shadow.

"Paper, mister? All about a wreck o' the *Queen*. New lista lost and missin'. Evenin' paper?"

Houghton shook his head and walked deliberately back past the man. Then he turned again and touched him lightly on the arm to arrest his attention.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you seemed so solitary that I have ventured to disregard the conventions and address you." He spoke with a delicate deliberation of utterance that proclaimed him to belong in culture, as well as in age, to an older generation, yet with a kindness that belonged to no age, it was so personal.

The other man had started at his touch and drawn back defensively.

"Well?" he asked. It was strange that one word could so betray, as this did, a mingling of resentment and suspicion and annoyance, and, with all, a half-shamed desire of speech.

"I do not wish to be intrusive," said Houghton, "but this is a day when our common brotherhood ought to be remembered, and if you are in reality as lonely as you seem——"

"Christmas Eve—so it is," said the man, filling in the other's pause. "I had forgotten."

"May I ask if you have any place to—ah—go for your dinner?" Houghton had been forced into bald directness of speech, but the look of personal interest in his face neutralized any offensiveness that the question might otherwise have held.

The shabby man pulled his red hands from his pockets and shrugged his shoulders.



He seemed to shrink from observation, yet he lingered before the tempting window.

"I was just wondering whether I should have any dinner. I have no money. Society doesn't have much use for a man without money, does it?" His mouth twisted in a mirthless grin. "What do hungry men do, under such circumstances? Go to the police station? Or is it first necessary to commit a crime in order to be lodged and fed?"

Houghton laughed in relief.

comfortable, though inexpensive, attire.

"Hunger is relative, isn't it? Shall we move on? And let me introduce myself. My name is Houghton."

"Mine is Rogers," said the other curtly. But he fell into step with Houghton, and they walked on together. "You are doing this, of course, because it is Christmas—not because of me?" There was something in his tone curiously suspicious and resentful.

"Your unfamiliarity with what may perhaps be called the usual mode of procedure," he said, with his genial courtliness, "shows at least that you have not made personal experiment with that method. And since you admit having no other engagement, I trust I need not hesitate in pressing upon you an invitation to dine with me and my wife."

"You do not know me." The man spoke quickly, drawing somewhat back into the shadow.

"No, but you are a fellow man—and I infer from what you have just said that you are hungry."

"I am. I have eaten nothing today."

"That is, then, a bond."

"Do you mean that you have ever been hungry?" demanded the stranger sharply, with an appraising look at the other's

"It's a custom of long standing in our family," said Houghton simply. "We always try to have some stranger share this meal."

"You must pick up queer customers sometimes, if you go about it this way," the man said ungraciously. "But, of course, I'll be glad to get something to eat. And if there is no public soup kitchen, or such thing—— I'm afraid I don't know how to beg."

"Last edition! All about a wreck o' the *Queen*. New an' complete lista passengers——" The eager newsboy was running along by their side.

Houghton shook his head, but Rogers hesitated. "D'you suppose there is anything new in the paper? I haven't a penny——"

"The paper is in my pocket, if you want to look at it. No, there's nothing new. The passengers that were left on board when the lifeboats got away have all been taken off by the life-savers. The question now is what may have become of the small boats that have not been heard from. They may have been swamped or swept out to sea by the gale, or they may have come ashore somewhere down the coast. In that case, we will know as soon as they are picked up. Until we hear, there's nothing further to know or to do. Here we are at home." They entered the ornate hall of a flat building and ascended the stairs to a door which Houghton opened with a latchkey.

"My dear!" he called, with something both warning and propitiatory in his tone. "I've brought a guest——"

"Yes, Clarence," a voice answered from the kitchen, and Mrs. Houghton hurried in, curiosity and kindness equally mingled in her manner.

"This is Mr. Rogers, my dear. My wife, Mr. Rogers."

"You're very welcome," said Mrs. Houghton smilingly. "It's a sharp night out, isn't it? Dinner will be on the table in a few minutes, Clarence."

"Just time enough for us to get ready," said Houghton, carrying Rogers off to his own bedroom.

"Who is he, Clarence?" whispered Mrs. Houghton, with due regard for the thinness of the walls. "He doesn't look like your office men."

"He isn't. I saw him looking in at a pastry shop, and he admitted that he had eaten nothing to-day and had no money. That seemed to establish his title to a dinner. A bit of a socialist, I fancy. But when a man goes hungry too long, he does become a sort of a savage, my dear. You know what a bear I am when dinner is late!"

Mrs. Houghton nodded absently—which perhaps may not have been the answer he expected. "I hope he knows enough to appreciate when a dinner is good," she said.

Rogers came out from the bedroom wearing a house coat that Houghton had placed at his disposal. He was pallid, and still shivering, but he had made himself clean and he looked like a man of power. Though he was wearing Houghton's old coat, he seemed by some strange, dark force to have assumed a rôle of dominance that reduced his host to the status of a clerk. A slight shade of disapproval tinged Mrs. Houghton's curiosity, and it did not wholly fade even when she observed that he swallowed his soup in the ravenous silence of a starved man. Mrs. Houghton was her own cook and waitress, and when she had removed the soup plates from the table, she purposely delayed a little before bringing in the roast goose.

"He doesn't realize that a hungry man should eat slowly," she said to herself.

When she returned to the dining room, the two men were talking, her husband with the precise carefulness that told her he was deeply interested in what he was saying, the stranger with the antagonistic quality that seemed to animate all his speech.

"You talk of human brotherhood, but

at bottom we are beasts, every one of us, big and little," he was saying. "We all fight for ourselves, always, in everything, only some people are hypocrites and won't admit it. But when the need comes, men will trample each other to death every time to save themselves. It's human nature."

"Is it?" Houghton cut in eagerly. "Isn't it the traitor within the gates—the animal nature in man—that justifies your contempt? Human nature has given us all we know of sainthood and heroism." His voice dropped and thrilled as he added: "There was the *Titanic*."

Rogers turned a look upon him that was like a knife thrust. Then his lips lifted over his teeth. "And how about the *Queen*?"

"We don't know about the *Queen*."

Rogers shrugged: "I wasn't speaking of moments when people are shaken out of the normal by facing death. How about everyday life? Have you met with much practical brotherhood yourself?"

"If by brotherhood you mean kindness, helpfulness, sympathetic understanding—most certainly I have," said Houghton eagerly.

"The world has treated you right, eh? What is your business position? You're a clerk somewhere, aren't you?"

"I have an office position with the V. B. Railroad," said Houghton with dignity.

Rogers looked up alertly. "Oh, you have? How long have you been there?"

"Thirty-five years."

"And you have attained to this?" Rogers' eye swept the little dining room. His tone poorly concealed a mocking amusement.

"Yes," said Houghton, following the glance. But in his eye and in his voice there was modest pride.

There was a ring and a double tap at the door, and Mr. Houghton rose.

"That's Millie!" he cried.

"Our daughter Milicent," Mrs. Houghton explained to their guest as she, too, rose and turned to greet the young woman who entered, leading a beautiful little girl of about three. "Why, Millie, whatever——"

"Frank has been kept at the office because of this dreadful wreck, so I ran over just for a minute—— Go to gramma, Patty! He won't be home till all hours probably. Isn't it a shame! Christmas Eve, too! And Patty was to sit up for dinner!"

"Sit down here and have some dessert with us, anyway. This is Mr. Rogers, Millie. My daughter, Mrs. Chapman. Her husband is the telegraph operator here, and of course the accident means extra work for him."

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Rogers!" said Millie, with her father's smile. She knew the family Christmas custom, so she betrayed no surprise at the appearance of this stranger at the table. "Yes, Frank is just swamped with messages asking about the wreck. There is a report that Mr. Halman, the big railroad man, was on the *Queen*, and that he got off alone with two sailors—bribed them to cut the boat loose before any one else could get in."

"I'll never believe that," said her father firmly. "Indeed, I may say that I know it to be impossible, from my knowledge of the man."

Rogers looked up in surprise. "You know him?"

"Not intimately, of course. But I have met him. It was about fifteen years ago, in New York City. You remember, Alma? I have told you all about it. I was talking to a newsboy outside of my hotel—a crippled boy, with a pathetic face. Just then Mr. Halman came along. I didn't know who he was, but I entered into conversation with him as to a newsboy's life in a great city. He bought a paper and tossed the boy a dollar. And he

did it so spontaneously, so splendidly! It just showed what he was like. Afterward I found out who he was, and when I passed him on the street the next day, he remembered me and nodded. I know that dollar must have meant a great deal to the boy." Houghton spoke softly, as if the reminiscence were somehow sacred.

"It probably did not mean very much to Mr. Halman," said Millie, with her crisp little laugh. "It probably meant that he was in a hurry, and didn't want to stop for the change. And he probably skinned somebody before the day was over to make it up!"

"Millie! What language!" protested her mother, with a warning glance at the top of Patty's head.

"You'd better say, 'What sentiments!'" said Houghton, shaking his head at them both.

"I'm only quoting Frank!" cried Millie gayly.

"I wish Frank wouldn't teach you to be cynical."

"Frank says that Mr. Halman was probably up to some deviltry, because if he was on board, it was under another name. Maybe he was snooping around to buy up the V. B. on the sly. He has wanted it for a long time. If he gets it, he'll close the offices here, and then you'll be out of a job, father-kins."

For a moment Houghton looked startled. Then he shook his head and smiled.

"My dear! Why repeat such unkind gossip? Mr. Halman has enemies, of course, because he stands in a prominent position, but he is no more likely to go out and destroy the V. B. than I am to go out and knock down Patty's snow fort. I tell you I have seen him. He is a great man—an honorable and generous man."

"Even if he did row away in the first boat from the *Queen* and leave the others to shift for themselves?"

"A cruel slander. I would stake my life on it."

"But isn't his life more important than the average man's?" said Rogers. He spoke challengingly. "If he did make sure of his own life, isn't his life more important than a common sailor's or a roustabout's or a common excursionist's?"

Houghton looked troubled. "You mean because of this—ah, because of the opportunities that such wealth gives a man!" His eye lit with swift appreciation of the idea. "Ah, yes, power like his is a trust—I see your idea. Like owning Aladdin's lamp. But he would never claim a privilege because of it. I know him too well ever to believe that!"

Mrs. Houghton smiled at her daughter. It was as if she were appealing to the understanding of another woman over the dreamy head of this man of theirs. But since Millie's marriage, that young woman had developed heterodox tendencies.

"Yes, if he ever rubbed his lamp in the way you mean," she said vivaciously. "But that's a big 'if.' Frank says he's a highway robber."

"Does he, indeed?" asked Mr. Rogers, with interest. "Well, a good many people would agree with him. That's because Halman usually gets what he goes after. But isn't that what every one tries to do? It's a question of success. As I said before, life is a battle—every man for his own hand. The animals fight each other—for food, for mates. Men fight each other for gain, for life. We're all selfish—all of us."

Houghton looked battered, though his head was unbowed. Mrs. Houghton saw it, and came gallantly to his support.

"If that were true, there would be no mothers!"

"Eh?" said Rogers blankly.

"You men think business is the meas-

ure of life," she said, with a fine air of scorn. "It is merely an incident—of very little importance compared with other things!"

"Is poverty an incident?" demanded Rogers, with an air of closing an argument.

"What else? *What else?*" cried Houghton quickly. His wrinkled gray face was glowing with an unquenchable light. "The really important things are outside of business."

"For instance?" their guest asked mockingly.

"Kindness. Love. Children," cried Mrs. Houghton.

"And honor, and the power to look any man in the face, and to sleep at night with no haunting thoughts of any one wronged by your deed or made unhappy through your carelessness or wretched through your greed," her husband added.

"Extry! Extry!" The call of the newsboys in the street came up to their windows. "All abouta *Queen!*"

There was a ring at the phone.

"That's Frank!" cried Millie. "I told him to call me up here when he was ready to start for home." She ran to the phone, and the others listened without pretense of concealment.

"Yes? Frank? . . . Oh, you poor thing! . . . All right, dear. I'll have some strong coffee ready. . . . Yes, right away. . . . What's that? If it proves that Halman was on board? . . . The idea! . . . Why, Frank, the idea! . . . All right, poor dear. I'll have everything hot as hot. . . . 'By.'" She came back to the dining room, smiling.

"Frank will be relieved in half an hour now, so I must hurry home. And what do you think? Wall Street is having nervous prostration because they don't know whether Halman is dead or hiding or what. If he isn't heard from to-morrow, there'll be a panic, and then Frank says there'll be hell to pay."

"Millie!" cried her mother reprovingly.

"Well, that's what Frank says. I'm only quoting. Come, Patty, where are your things? We must go home to dada. Oh, mother, I must tell you—" The two women went off with the child to another room.

Houghton was fingering his coffee spoon with a troubled look.

"But what would he hide for?" he asked. "I can't see—"

Rogers laughed with the malicious pleasure of a man brushing away the innocence of a child. "Why, if there should be a panic, certain stocks would go down the toboggan. And if Halman wanted those stocks—for instance, to get control of your V. B., as your astute daughter suggests—naturally he'd rather get them cheap. If the Street thought him dead, and he really should happen to be alive and on hand—very actively on hand—it would mean millions."

"For him?" asked Houghton gravely.

"Of course. We're talking about him."

"But somebody would lose those same millions, wouldn't they?"

"Oh, yes. Of course. Somebody would be squeezed."

"Then I don't believe it," said Houghton firmly. "A man could not face death and come back to life, and then use the marvelous chance of his escape to ruin other people. That would be an impossible thing for any man of honor to do."

"We were speaking of Halman," said Rogers dryly.

Houghton looked at him with a disapproval that slowly softened into regret.

"You have been hardly treated by the world, Mr. Rogers, and it has made you skeptical as to the good intentions of people. I don't blame you. If I had had your hard luck, I might have been suspicious of people myself. Of course,



"So it seems you have a pull with Halman," he said quizzically.

I have been fortunate above the average. I have everything the heart of man could wish, so it's no credit to me to believe that the world is a pretty good place. But—you're wrong in believing the worst." He smiled persuasively.

"Think so?"

"I know it. Why, consider, Rogers. If humanity were not fundamentally and essentially good, the world would literally have gone to smash long ago."

"Eh?"

"Truth and goodness and beauty are all in line with order. They are constructive forces. The universe must run on orderly lines to run at all. You can't conceive of a machine running if every part does not work harmoniously with every other part. The universe as a whole *must* be harmonious. That is self-evident."

Rogers listened keenly. "That sounds logical as a theory. But, to be quite frank with you, Mr. Houghton, it has seemed to me that the goodness of the majority was the field and opportunity

of those who were not—well, hampered by those bonds."

"That is, the virtuous people seem to you weaklings?"

"Yes—in a measure."

"And the people who take advantage of their innocence are really the clever ones—the efficient men?"

"Well, they do seem more successful, don't they?"

"They seem to me like sea gulls beating their wings against the tempest of the Lord," said Houghton vigorously. "They are bound to be swept under in time—simply bound to be. And they think themselves strong! Isn't it pitiable?"

Rogers did not answer. He was toying with the grapes on his plate when the two women came in with Patty wrapped for the street.

"Say by-by to grampa, Pattykins."

Houghton picked up the child, and smiled into her drowsy eyes. The face she lifted for his kiss was so exquisitely soft and fine that he caught his breath, looking at it. He turned to Rogers.

"Here's your answer, Rogers! If the universe were not based on beauty and order and truth, she would not be possible! Look at her. We lose the mint mark with much handling—but she shows it still!"

Rogers looked down at the child Houghton held—looked long and intently. Then he turned away without speaking.

When Houghton came back from seeing his daughter to the head of the stairs, Rogers was still standing in the same attitude of thoughtful silence. He looked up, however, with an air of returning to practical considerations.

"Mr. Houghton, how far would your faith in the inherent honesty of humanity go, do you suppose? For instance, would it carry you to the point of lending me money enough to get to New York?"

Houghton looked at him with fleeting surprise. "If you have any reason to suppose that you will find an opening in New York——"

Rogers nodded with conviction. "Yes, I have. I have a definite promise of work, if I can take it up at once. If I could go up to-night, I'd be fixed. And I could return your loan immediately. There are people in New York who know me well enough to help me out, once I am on the ground."

"Why, certainly I will advance your fare," said Houghton cordially. He took out a worn pocketbook and counted out the necessary amount without a tremor. Rogers saw that the pocketbook was practically empty when he replaced it, and he tugged at his mustache to hide a curious smile that twitched at his lips.

"I think he'll pay it back," Houghton said to his wife with brave optimism when Rogers had departed with the money. He was economically turning down the flames that had blazed in holiday cheer about the gas log in the fireplace.

Mrs. Houghton finished putting the room to rights; then she came and dropped an understanding kiss upon her husband's forehead.

"It would be a pity if you couldn't have a little fling on Christmas Eve," was all she said.

The money did come back, however, and very promptly. It came in the form of a cashier's check, with a scribbled line:

Many thanks for your kindness.

ROGERS.

Houghton beamed for a day over it. And that ended the personal episode of the stranger at the gates.

In the following summer the long-anticipated absorption of the V. B. Road by the Halman lines came about, although there had been no panic to depress prices artificially. That had been averted, by the way, by the statement issued by Halman's secretary on Christmas Day, disposing of the rumor that Halman had been a passenger on the ill-fated *Queen*. It appeared that he had been at home all the time, though temporarily indisposed. Naturally the question as to what the consequences of the change in management would be agitated the mind of every old employee of the V. B. Would the local offices be continued, or would they not? It meant—almost—life or death to a hundred families. The doubt hung in the air like a sword of Damocles. Then Halman's mighty hand shot forth, snatched the menacing sword, and hurled it, harmless, to the bottomless sea. In other words, he decided not to remove the local offices. A hundred families resumed living.

But for Houghton there was something more than a commuted sentence in the decision. His department chief sent for him one day, soon after the local matter was settled.

"So it seems you have a pull with Halman," he said quizzically.

"I beg pardon?"

The chief knew Houghton, and perceived that his mystification was not assumed.

"Halman spoke of you when I had a conference with him in New York," he explained. "Said he met you some fifteen years ago in New York. Spoke of some incident connected with a crippled newsboy. He didn't go into details. You probably remember?"

"Yes, certainly I remember, but——"

"You must have made an impression, because he picked your name up at once when I happened to mention it in speaking of the force. He suggested

that your long experience here ought to make you valuable to the new local head, so I am authorized to offer you a position as confidential clerk." He outlined a position that would double Houghton's salary and prestige.

"You accept?" he asked at the end.

"Accept! Oh, yes," Houghton said pleasantly. "I think I can meet those requirements." And then his eyes glowed with sudden fervor.

"Think of his remembering! Think of it! Fifteen years! And there are people who call Mr. Halman hard and conscienceless. Why, I'm *proud* to be working for a man like that!"



Christmas Eve Remorse

I WISHT (just to-night) that I didn't know's much
'Bout things that's important, like Santa and such.
I wisht I was ign'rant—as ign'rant as sis—
Fer 'tain't a bit funny to see fun you miss!

But *boys*, as a rule,
Ain't easy to fool,

They *can't* believe always the stuff that they hear
'Bout Santa—the chimblly—and flyin' reindeer,
So—well, I've found out—but I'm *sorry*! You bet
I wisht I was ign'rant like sister is *yet*!

Oh, dear, I feel bad! I feel now like I do
Right after a whippin' when pa's just got through.
I'd like to punch sis! *She's* as happy's can be!
How *can* she believe it? It surely beats me

Why *girls*, as a rule,
Is easy to fool!

Oh, if—if I hadn't 'a' stayed wide awake
To find out if some one was playin' a fake,
To-night I'd be thinkin' it wasn't our paws,
But really and *honest* a *true* Santa Claus!

BLANCHE FARGO GRISWOLD.



The Broadening Results of Travel

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "Fleshpots of Egypt," "Like Other People," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER

WHEN Letitia, who, it was well known, had long looked forward to her first Italian trip, returned from Naples by the same steamer in which she had sailed from New York, she volunteered at first no explanation of the circumstance, even when the well disposed of her acquaintance offered her an excuse for her eccentricity by suggesting Vesuvius and the striking trade syndicates as ample justification for her. Her natural diffidence seemed accentuated by the ignominy of her swift reappearance in America, and she said little, but silently replaced in her bookcase the small library with which, upon setting out, she had somewhat unduly loaded her steamer trunk to the detriment of her modest wardrobe—Horace and Dante, "Romola," and the Brownings. The true story of her return was this:

As the ship steamed down the bay, she looked upon her fellow voyagers with a regard in which the slight touch of envy only emphasized the admiration. They were all so assured; they took possession of the writing room for their pilot notes with an air of such familiarity; they were so brisk and knowing in the matter of steamer chairs; they displayed the highest degree of modern efficiency, in changing from

smart shore clothes to smart sea clothes. They availed themselves of the wireless service with such princeliness.

She was conscious of her awkward unaccustomedness in all that made them so wonderful to her. Wistfully her eyes followed their capable motions; would foreign journeying do as much for her as it had palpably done for them? She had always regarded it with secret ardor as one of the most enriching of human experiences. To look at the skies, the hills, the sea, from which the ancient makers of the world had drawn their inspirations; to set her feet upon the very stones trod by saints and martyrs, by poets and warriors, the lords of life—these were the dreams that she had dreamed, these and the mystic quickening of her own spirit that should follow the shadowy communion.

Of course, the manifestations of the effect of foreign travel that she observed in the first hours of her voyage were trivial, but they were by no means despicable. They were indications of what she might hope—buds of promise, straws denoting the current of the wind. She drew a deep breath of splendid air, leaned back in her steamer chair, and prepared to absorb culture from the very first.

"Have you ever taken the southern trip before by the *Queen Zenobia*?" asked the occupant of the chair at her right.

Letitia replied, shamefacedly, that she had never taken the southern trip before by anything; whereupon, her neighbor spoke kindly, though remotely.

"How you will enjoy it!" she said.

"Have you been often?" asked Letitia, with timid eagerness.

"Eighteen times," was the reply.

"This is my fourth trip around the world. We go on to the Orient from Naples." Letitia gasped, and grew wide-eyed. "I had my chair placed away from the rest of the party—one grows so desperately tired of one's party on a round-the-world trip."

"Oh, it's a—it's a personally conducted party?"

"Yes, it's the easiest way to travel, and sometimes one meets agreeable people. I came home in nineteen-ten with



She was conscious of her awkward unaccustomedness in all that made them so wonderful to her.

an entirely new set of friends, really charming people!" She spoke with enthusiasm. Letitia repressed the gasp forming on her lips, and tried rapidly to accommodate her mind to the novel fact that some persons preferred their friendships new, like their wardrobes. Her neighbor went on: "And at the least, the round-the-world trip gives one four or five months without the bother of deciding what to do next."

"Oh!" said Letitia thoughtfully; here was another view of existence for a young woman whose leisure had never led her to realize how laborious might be the task of filling it. And then her neighbor floundered to her feet and went in pursuit of the leader of her expedition to protest that, after all, she was not satisfied with the position of her chair. She still desired it isolated from her party, but she had premonitions that she was going to be afflicted with the odor of the steerage cookery the whole way across.

"That's the worst of the southern trip," she said. "So many of the Italians go home whenever there's a little money ahead. I think we should either keep them out entirely or insist upon their staying in entirely."

"Hear you're going to Rome?" said a bluff and fatherly person to Letitia, a little later. She answered, "Yes," in a low voice, as if she were admitting herself on the verge of matrimony or the cloister, or some other mystic initiation into life.

"Well," said the bluff and fatherly one, "you can be comfortable in Rome if you know how to go about it. I come over every other year—on business, Lord bless you, on business! Insurance. And I can get along in Rome for a week or two. The first time I came, I was up against it—up against it hard! Never was so homesick in my life, until—do you know what pulled me up and gave me a new grip on myself?"

Letitia confessed herself lacking in the gift of divination, and breathlessly awaiting a revelation of new truths.

"Well, I'll tell you: I was riding across the Campagna one afternoon, after I'd been out trying to insure a monastery up in the hills, and there, in the midst of that dreary, flat, open stretch, I saw the 'fifty-seven-variety' sign. In English, you know—picture of the pickle, too. It might have been the Jersey marshes! I tell you my spirits rose. I said to the Italian fellow I had along to interpret that the world was a small place, after all, and that Rome was in it. Rome was on the map. That sign was the finest sight I had seen in Italy; made me realize the brotherhood of man, and all that." He glowed with the recollection, and added kindly: "I'll give you the address of a tea room where you can get Maryland waffles, and I'm in a boarding place—pension, they call it—where they have baked beans and brown bread once a week, and where you hear as good English as you do in New York."

"Thank you," said Letitia, the uncompromising idealist. "But one doesn't travel so many miles from Boston and Maryland, does one, to be terribly eager for waffles and brown bread at the end of the journey?"

Then she felt that she had been unnecessarily curt, as the paternal gentleman withdrew with the candid statement that he was blessed if he had ever been able to see why people did travel, if they didn't have to on business.

Before the end of the first week the experienced travelers by whom Letitia was surrounded, filled with the spirit of inexpensive kindness, had formed the habit of dropping items of foreign information before her. She had six addresses for the only absolutely reliable, cheap Roman pearls, though she had been unable to extract any instruction as to how to reach Horace's Sabine farm, a spot that she felt impelled to

visit; the insurance man, indeed, seemed to think that it was a rural road house, and said magnanimously that one thing he would grant to Italy—and that was that you could get a mighty good, cheap, light wine at some of those country inns. She had secured the name of the shop where there was an American soda fountain, an institution that afforded her no temptation at home, but in which she was apparently expected to find heart-stirring attraction abroad. She had twenty-seven addresses of lace and embroidery shops in Florence, each guaranteed

by its sponsor to be the proven best and most responsible. But when she timidly ventured a question as to the present condition and occupancy of Casa Guidi, the experienced travelers looked at her vaguely and said they didn't remember—Whereupon, Letitia, blushing the shamed blush of the convicted pedant, murmured the name of the Brownings, and they said, more cheerfully:



"Hear you're going to Rome?" said a bluff and fatherly person to Letitia, a little later.

"Oh, poetry! No, we don't know anything about Casa Guidi, but whatever you do, don't leave Florence without going to the hat market. You can get the dearest automobile bonnets—or you could use them for garden hats—for next to nothing, my dear!"

Letitia received the information with the lukewarmness of a person not owning a car and finding a gingham sun-bonnet adequate for her gardening.

"You're going back from Cherbourg or Boulogne? How nice! Then, of course, you'll have at least a week in Paris. What a pity you didn't in June, in season for the asparagus—" Letitia, whose thoughts happened to be at the moment with Abelard and Eloise, closed her eyes in sudden faintness at the profane suggestion. "And if you stay long enough to have any dressmaking done, I can give you the address of the best little woman in Paris."

They told her of hotels where they had stayed happily for whole winters. For scenery, music, language, art, historical association? Letitia put the questions with increasing diffidence. Oh, no! For none of these reasons, but because the heating system kept them as comfortable as they would have been at home, absolutely, my dear! They told of pleasant mornings at their bankers, where it was such a joy to meet fellow countrywomen, and where, they implied, the visitors' writing room had greatly enlarged their circle of ac-

quaintance. They crowded upon one another's heels in the enthusiastic kindness of their hearts, hurrying to tell the unaccustomed traveler how to live so that she might realize as little as was humanly possible that she had left her native land. To succeed in that and to learn the lair of the always irresistible bargain—these, she discovered, were the great gifts of foreign travel. The more experienced the traveler, the deeper her knowledge.

So that, as has been said, Letitia made haste to return to Greencastle, New Hampshire. When, finally, she descended to explanation with a few intimates, she said she had come back because she wished to keep her knowledge of Europe unobscured; and it was then decided that she was rather affected, and that perhaps it was just as well she had not continued her journey. For what climax of artificiality might she not have attained when merely crossing the ocean had caused her such pretentious darkness of speech?



Giving the Desired Information

IN the barber shop of a big hotel in Chicago, there is a pretty manicure who, even at her early age, has tired of the attentions and empty-headed talk of the patrons of the place. So she has put under the glass top of her worktable a set of answers to the questions that men have been in the habit of asking her.

To-day, if a man sits down at her table, he reads through the glass the following enlightening things:

"I am twenty years old.

"No; I am not married.

"No; I don't want to be.

"Yes; lots of them try to make love to me.

"I go home on the street car every evening. I don't like to walk.

"This hair is my own.

"I have two brothers—and they are very big and very high-tempered.

"I don't feel any interest in the newspaper stories about scandals in high life.

"It's not against the rules of the house for me to flirt if I want to. But I don't like to—really.

"I do this work because I don't know how to do any other, kind.

"I am not a suffragist.

"I like candy—when I buy it.

"Yes; tips are allowed in this hotel."

Santa Claus Redivivus

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "The Stolen Forty," "The Better Baby," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. GUENTHER BREUL

SANTY CLAUS was dead, cruelly done in the midst of his trusting friends. And the archconspirator was Miss Jonas, no less a personage than Sunday-school teacher.

Miss Jonas wore a high, stiffened collar and a severely proper, thin face; and her system of education must have been efficacious, for we possessed among us a little boy who could recite more Scripture verses than any other little boy in the Sunday school.

He, however, was not I; and this vainglorious reference would not have been made had not Sammy Wilkins stuck a pin into Jamie Brackett's knickerbockers—and onward.

Good we were, very good, with ante-Christmas goodness; but occasionally we lapsed. So Sammy lapsed upon Jamie, who, with sudden stir and "Ouch!" leveled at him round, accusing eyes.

"I'm goin' to tell Santy. 'Then he won't bring you anything.'"

"What did you say, James?" demanded Miss Jonas.

"Sammy stuck me with a pin, an' I'm goin' to tell Santy, an' Santy won't bring him anything."

"That was naughty of Sammy. But you ought not to try to tell Santa Claus. Santa Claus never does bring us anything. We mustn't think so. There is no such being as Santa Claus. He is a myth."

"He brings things to our house," faltered Jamie; and we all murmured and

nodded, ready with corroborative testimony.

Miss Jonas ruthlessly proceeded. She must have been alert for such an opportunity.

"When we pretend to believe in Santa Claus, on Christmas Day, that is as bad as for the children of Israel to bow down before the golden calf. I'm sure that none of you want to be an idol worshiper—an idolater! We observe Christmas Day because that is the birthday of Jesus, Who was born in a manger and Who died for us all. On His birthday we all go to church and sing praises, and we give each other little gifts to show that we are glad He came into the world to save sinners like you and me. There is no Santa Claus. He doesn't give the gifts. We give them, to be glad for the sake of Jesus. They come from papa and mamma and auntie and sister and brother and everybody.

"Santa Claus is only a name—a pretend game adopted from heathen ages. We are not wicked heathen; we are Christians, and we love the truth. But Santa Claus is a lie; and if we pretend that there is a Santa Claus who gives us things, or if we ask Santa Claus for things, we stand up for a lie. We mustn't thank *him*; we must thank our dear papas and mammas and God. So let us not pay any more attention to the pretend of Santa Claus. And let us remember that whether we get *any* gifts or not, we must be glad

of Christmas Day, when Jesus was born in a manger to save sinners. Robbie, now let us hear how nicely *you* can recite the collect."

Robbie recited—a scared, small voice stumbling through a great, stunned silence. To the old world Pan once had died; to our new world Santy Claus was dead, and we struggled to comprehend.

Miss Jonas' speech was full of words, shifting and kaleidoscopic. I still could not wholly fathom what was the case of Santy Claus. I had seen his picture. It was in one of my books at home, showing him rosy and whiskery and laden, with one leg already in a chimney of a good little boy's house. He seemed to me much more real than Jesus, who was represented as a baby—and as everybody knows, a baby doesn't give anything; on the contrary, you have to give everything to it!

Now, according to Miss Jonas, as I understood her, there was a golden calf in the manger—a Christmas present, I imagined, to Jesus from His papa and mamma; and we must not ask Santy Claus for things, any more; and we needn't be good, because we'd been saved, anyhow, by Jesus being born out in a cold manger instead of where it was warm. This did away with the necessity of being good, and with the necessity of Santy Claus, and all that; and Santy Claus must be viewed as a wicked heathen—akin, I fancied, to the devil (Sh!), whom to mention was to swear!

All the class, for this session, maintained a dazed, frightened mien; and, dismissed, we filed soberly out. Soberly we wended our homeward way; not, as usual, with kittenish or coltish ante-Christmas skips and jumps, and explosive ante-Christmas brag and chatter; but soberly, even heavily, surcharged with weighty thoughts too vague and serious for expression.

There was no Santy Claus. Miss

Jonas had said it, and our very doubts confirmed it.

"I don't care. Bet I get a lot of presents, anyhow," defied Sammy, tossing his turbaned head. "Guess I can ask Jesus for 'em."

But Jesus, a baby at this time, seemed a factor inefficient, lackluster, as compared with the rosy, vigorous, well-equipped and experienced, time-tested Santy Claus. I had more confidence in father and mother; but whether they could meet the crisis and continue on alone, without the coöperation of Santy, I considered a matter uncertain.

However, perhaps Miss Jonas was mistaken. My mother and father knew more than she did; and if they said that Santy was alive and in active service, as of old, then he was, you bet!

"Mamma, ain't there any Santy Claus?" I asked. "There is, ain't they? Miss Jonas says there ain't. But there is, ain't they?"

Mamma looked at papa, and papa looked at mamma. Eyebrows were slightly lifted, in parental wireless telegraphy; and, while waiting, I divided my expectations between the reply and the drumstick—both due me.

"Did Miss Jonas say so, dearie?"

"Yes. She said there wasn't any Santy Claus, and when we said there was, we told lies, and we give each other presents, and it's jus' becuz Jesus was born in a manger. Is Santy Claus Jesus grown up? Wasn't there never any Santy Claus? What becomes of Santy Claus?"

The final question, I am certain, was the poser. Mamma hesitated and looked at papa; and papa hastily passed me my plate.

"Eat your dinner, now," he suggested. "And this afternoon or to-night mamma'll tell you about Santy."

Thus the acuteness of the situation was deftly capped, to bide a later disposal and mamma's lap.

I felt that the fate of Santy Claus

trembled in the balance. That is, I heard, after dinner, between mamma and papa a significant murmur, to be hushed or hastened whenever I drifted near. Then ensued naps and fidgets, and a walk with papa, and dusk and bread and milk and mamma's lap before the glowing stove.

"Mamma, ain't there any Santy Claus? Don't he give anybody anything any more? Can't we have Christmas? What becomes of Santy Claus?"

Mother was more lucid than Miss Jonas; but it was not for her to discredit the Sunday-school teacher—especially to array against truth deceit. No; and, alas, no! I was vaguely conscious that to mother and father there was something wrong in the spirit of Miss Jonas' instructions, but not in the letter. Kind and ghastly, the details were rearranged for my benefit.

Santy Claus—Santy Claus *really* did not exist; it was just fun to make believe and talk. Wouldn't I rather that papa and mamma gave me my presents—and grandma and Uncle Tom and Auntie Emma? They always had. I was a big boy now—too big for Santy Claus. On Christmas Day we all were Santy Clauses, because we were generous and happy and glad and thankful. But we must not think only of presents; or, when we did think of them, we must remember that they were given to remind us of the little Baby Jesus, Whom God gave to the world—to each and every one of us. That was Christmas enough, forever and ever.

Of course, I could play about Santy Claus, if I wanted to. No, it wouldn't be wicked. No, I wouldn't be a heathen idolater, bowing to a golden calf. Miss Jonas didn't mean that I mustn't *play* Santy Claus. I could play Santy Claus just like I played steam train, or—or bear. What became of Santy, then? Why—the same that became of the

steam train, or the bear! This was a master stroke, but puzzling.

Yes, Santy Claus' reindeer were play, too. The man who made up "The Night Before Christmas" hadn't seen them, really. Oh, no, no; he wasn't a wicked liar. How did he know their names? Well, he must have invented the names. Santy Claus' sleigh and his pack and his bells—they all were play. But Jesus wasn't play.

No, she and papa never had seen Jesus; neither had Miss Jonas or anybody *we* knew. But He had been seen—many, many years ago people had seen Him and talked with Him. Wasn't it possible, then, I would ask, that Santy had been seen, too? She didn't think so; she was certain about it—although, she confessed, she didn't know all the people in the whole world and what each one had seen. And how we had got the pictures of Santy Claus, she could not say. They were just a part of the story.

My pre-slumber prayer that night was unsatisfactory to me. I didn't want to be wicked and a heathen; yet Christmastide seemed to demand an extra bedside appeal, and for Santy Claus there was no substitute.

The very spirit of heresy and infidelity appeared to have spread abroad. The next day, downtown on an errand, I heard "Spider" McKivett—who was a bad, big boy—flout Santy Claus in the shocked and staring face of Petie Sorrell—who was a good, little boy.

"Aw, what you givin' us!" jeered Spider. "There ain't no Santy Claus. That's all a fake. Your ma and pa buy the things. You go ask 'em."

"Santy picks 'em out, though," faltered little Petie, stanch, but astonished. "An' he comes down the chimney with some, too!"

"G'wan!" jeered Spider. "That's a fake yarn, for babies. Your folks buy all the stuff, at the store."



"Aw, what you givin' us!" jeered Spider. "There ain't no Santy Claus. Your pa and ma buy the things. You go ask 'em." "Santy picks 'em out, though," faltered little Petie.

Petie's scared, round face quivered at the scandal, and he was unconvinced. Would that I might have stood as stanch! Dimly I envied him his unshaken faith, here on the brink of chaos.

It was an empty world. The jingle of the sleighbells, the toys in the shop windows, the garlanded carcasses of calf and hog—they touched me not with

anticipation. A stuffed Santy Claus in a store front only emphasized the story that Santy was all a make-believe. What was the use of Christmas, anyhow?

Under the shock of cataclysm such as had cracked from top to bottom one of my best and longest-accepted edifices, human nature needs a stimulant, like to that which might be obtained for a penny at old Tom's.

Perhaps, as author of this narrative, I should have introduced old Tom before. He was a well-known and most remarkable citizen of our town, because he couldn't see. He was stone-blind, which meant that he couldn't see a wink with either of his eyes; and usually he was called "Blind Tom."

Blind Tom kept a little tobacco and candy and what-not shop, of one counter, on the edge of a vacant lot just off Main Street. He cooked and ate and slept in the back room; the front room was his store. By adults it seemed to be noted chiefly for its dirt; but here in Blind Tom's you really could get more candy for a penny than anywhere else in town; and the dirt made no difference.

For a penny you could get two all-day suckers, of different colors and flavors—the kind on a stick, to be delightfully whipped in and out of your mouth. For a penny you could get several pieces of mixed candy selected—under your direction—by old Tom out of a pail standing on a shelf. For a penny you could get a black licorice ball, aged into a hardness beyond the hardness of other licorice balls, with which you could manfully swell out your cheeks and spit tobacco juice.

But the most remarkable charm about Tom was his irascible temper and his magic cane. Bad boys would tease old Tom, by false movements and titterings and pebble and snowball. Then his language was so terrible nobody could venture to repeat it, and the futile sweepings of his cane were as awful as a flaming sword.

The cane was a crook cane, and in its use old Tom seemed to be gifted with a peculiar skill almost diabolical. With a dart as swift as an adder's tongue he could thrust out the crook end in the right direction, and catch a boy around the ankle. Sometimes this was as a sudden joke, sometimes as a vengeance or a threat; but it always

came as a ghastly surprise. In fashion and from source undetermined, I connected this cane clutch with the fancied clutch of an octopus arm.

Then old Tom would cackle and chuckle and hideously grimace with his black-spectacled, unshaven, yellow-toothed countenance, as he hauled the prisoner in as near to him as he wished. No boy relished this!

The counter was raised from the floor, which facilitated old Tom's offensive operations. And from underneath this, or from his doorway, he made such astonishing lunges, that I, for one, could not but firmly believe that he could see, when he wanted to, right through those black glasses.

Old Tom's dingy little shop was vacant of other customer when, to tinkle of bell atop the door, I entered. It was a familiar interior, the same at Christmas as at the Fourth of July; for Tom was not much given to new decorating. Now, at sound of the bell, he came from his back room, feeling his way along to the counter, and behind.

"Well, what's wanted?" he bade, waiting.

"Good morning, Mr. Tom," I said politely.

"Good mornin' to you, sir. An' what can I do for you?"

"I don't know, Mr. Tom," I said. "I'm feeling pretty bad."

"Santy Claus ain't goin' to bring you nothin'—is that it, mebbe?" he hazarded; suspicious, I could see, of a prank. He was shifting his cane for action.

"There ain't any Santy Claus," I informed him.

He gave a sudden start, and peered—or seemed to peer.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"There ain't any Santy Claus," I repeated.

With adder dart his cane swept out underneath the counter and clapped me

around the left ankle. He hauled taut, and, panting, peered up at me across the counter. Then he cautiously set his foot upon his end of the cane and, straightening, faced me. Any movement of mine to extricate myself would be telegraphed along the cane. But I did not try to extricate myself.

"Now," he challenged, "say that again."

"There ain't any Santy Claus—is there, Mr. Tom?"

He breathed heavily from his recent exertion, and glared upon me as if I had made him furiously angry.

"Great powers!" he appealed generally; and he scratched his round head. "Here's a boy comes into my shop, jest afore Christmas, an' he says to me: 'There ain't no Santy Claus!' Great powers! An' what I'd better do with him I dunno. Lemme think."

"But there ain't, is there, Mr. Tom?" I ventured to insist.

"How do you know there ain't?" accused Mr. Tom sharply.

"My Sunday-school teacher says there ain't."

"Has she ever seen him?"

"I guess not."

"Who else says there ain't?"

"My papa and mamma."

"Have they ever seen him?"

"No, sir."

"Then," rasped old Tom, triumphant, "if they ain't never seen him, how do they know he ain't?"

This argument was a staver. It hadn't occurred to me before.

"Do *you* think there's a Santy Claus, Mr. Tom?" I asked.

"Do I think so! I know so! Of course there's a Santy Claus."

A great thrill passed through me, Old Tom spoke so very confidently. I gulped hard, for many questions were pressing to the fore. Old Tom must have felt my inward stir.

"Hey, now, you stand still," he cau-

tioned, his foot pinioning the cane more firmly. "Don't you try to get away."

"I'm not trying to get away," I hastened to assure him. "Did you—did you ever see Santy Claus, Mr. Tom?"

"To be sure I have! Why not? Do you think," demanded old Tom, his black spectacles holding me fascinated, "that becuz I'm blind in my eyes, I can't see when I want to?"

"But you can, can't you, Mr. Tom?" I asserted hopefully.

"Can't I? How do you s'pose I know jest how an' where to reach with my cane an' ketch bad boys by the ankles—yes, an' sometimes good ones, too, then?" upbraided old Tom. "How do I know a nickel from a cent, when people try to fool me? How do I know a red lollypop from a green one? How do I know when to light my lamp? How do I know it's mornin'? Don't you s'pose I can see? What do I wear these black specs for?"

The revelation was stupendous.

"An' you ask me if I've ever seen Santy Claus!" continued old Tom, still holding me fast by cane and glare. "At this blessed Christmastide! When he comes into this very place o' mine, an' him an' me have our own great times together, an' I see everything he's got, an' everywhere he's been or goin', an' when I ain't too busy, I go along—at night, you understand."

This small, dark shop seemed to me rather an unexpected quarter in which to find Santy Claus; and I wondered why old Tom did not decorate a little, by way of celebration. He might hang up something more Christmassy than those old speckled calendars and cigar lithographs; and upon the end of the counter was even a dried-up dish of fly poison, from last summer. But we were into topic more important.

"With the reindeer?" I encouraged.

"With the reindeer," nodded old Tom, emphatic. "But when I don't go, I foller him, anyhow. These here



With adder dart his cane swept out underneath the counter and clapped me around the left ankle.

black specs are my telescopes. Ameriky, England, France, Germany, Roosia—away we go! An' lemme tell *you*, that's a wonderful sight. Bells ringin' people singin', children laughin', presents droppin', stockin's in the chimleys, wreaths in the winders, trees in the corners, an' Santy Claus an' me chucklin' together!"

"Does he ever stay with you, Mr. Tom?" I asked, breathless.

"Stay with me?" repeated old Tom,

as if again incensed. "Of course he does! This here's his headquarters. No, not in the shop part; in my back room, where I live. He's there 'most the time, all Christmastide. I couldn't do without *him*. You may think that at Christmas, becuz I'm called blind, I don't have any fun. But when you ketch anybody sayin' that, you tell 'em they don't know what they're talkin' about. They don't know what goes on in my back room, an' behind these here

black glasses. There ain't any Santy Claus, do they say? Great powers! An' here I'm seein' him, an' talkin' with him, an' makin' a merry Christmas of it, with all his pack to handle over, an' all his stories to hear, an' all his places to visit if I like; an' I'm only a pore old blind man! Great powers!"

"Is he here now, Mr. Tom?" Oh, perhaps he was!

"Back in there? He might be. He will be, soon, anyhow. An' you don't believe in him! Isn't that a terrible thing to say, right at Christmas!" And old Tom shook his head mournfully. Really, his homely visage was distressed. "Well, go 'long now, if you like. I'm always busy, at Christmas-tide."

"You can tell Santy that I do believe in him, please," I instructed.

"So I will. Or you can tell him yourself. Believe in him as hard as you can, an' then when you get old an'

blind, like I am, you can see as many fine things as I do. Lift your foot out o' my cane, an' be off."

"But I've got a penny to spend," I hastily proffered. "Give me two all-day suckers, please—a white one and a blue one."

Old Tom deftly picked out a white one and a blue one, and handed them to me.

"Here," he said. "One from me an' one from Santy. Take 'em an' keep your penny."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Tom!" I accepted.

Passing out, I looked back. Old Tom was standing behind the counter, stock-still, his hands upon it, staring straight before him, smiling and mumbling as if addressing somebody. And it occurred to me, in awe, that he was talking with Santy Claus, perhaps seeing him.



The Wood Road

OVERARCHED with leafy sprays,
Reaching dainty arms across
Deep old ruts, those long green days,
Padded to the brim with moss,
Wound the wood road 'neath the feet
Of the dawdling horse we drove—
Such a safe old comrade, sweet,
Heeding not our whispered love!

Long, long dead, the old dumb friend;
All the towering trunks are felled;
That sweet road has reached its end;
Could it lose the charm it held?
Toast its memory in a tear.
Crooked, rough, of varying mood,
Still we saw it, O my dear,
Through love's eyes and found it good!

RHEEM DOUGLAS.

The Destiny of Ingersollia

By Marie Manning

Author of "The Stolen Bath," "An 'Only Child' Story," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL

THE weather that particular Monday presented a mixed bill—rain, sleet, and snow each struggled for precedence; the atmosphere was raw and penetrating, the sort of atmosphere that settles into the lungs like damp cotton waste. Sleet and snow underfoot had turned to slush, and this had mixed itself with motor grease into a sort of emulsion, so that Fifth Avenue, from the arch northward, suggested a battleground, from the number of horses that had fallen.

In those New York newspaper offices that undertake to supply even the weather report emotionally, Monday is usually a below-par day, unless something splendidly heinous develops, to start the circulation of reporters grown stagnant over the weekly holiday. In the Sunday department, the atmosphere resembles that of a household where a big dinner has been given the night before. It will be a week before the public gets another nickel banquet; in the meantime, a little dawdling over the next menu is only to be expected.

Miss Morris, after considering the emulsion underfoot and the sleeting snow overhead, decided to take a cab to Park Row, after a flash of mental arithmetic that computed the pressing and cleaning of a suit subjected to such weather. Within the cab, speeding southward through Bleeker Street, she reflected, with a certain amount of gratification, that only two weeks before she had achieved editorial dignity—of

a sort, and that if any one was to be sent out to pull bells on this particular *dies ira*, it would not be she.

The editorial dignity thus achieved was not eminent; it consisted in getting out the double "freak" pages, as they were called in the composing room, owing to their irregular and fanciful make-up, the two pages devoted to what the managing editor felt convinced women hungrily watched for—fashions, cooking concoctions, advice from a mysterious person with a fashionable name about not speaking to young men till properly introduced, and a half-column leader about love, the removal of blackheads, or how to sponge an India-silk dress over which some one has spilled a cup of chocolate.

Miss Morris indulged in no illusions about her mission of uplift to her sex, by means of the woman's page. The people she saw devouring the "advice to girls" as she hung on a strap of the elevated on her way uptown were chiefly men, amusedly toying with the riddle of the eternal feminine. And those who ate alive the front-page murder and the back-page editorial were the women employed in the downtown offices.

Miss Morris slid, rather than walked, on the treacly mess that had been tracked into the building. The door of the city room was open, and the air was humid from drying coats and umbrellas; ticker tape, exchanges, clippings had been trodden underfoot by



"Miss Morris, read that!"

wet shoes into a spongy pulp. The cry of "Copy! Copy!" was beginning to ring with staccato insistence; the city room had begun to awake and stretch itself.

The hencoop, as the ladies' sanctum was called, was at the end of the hall, and here was to be found Julia Meigs, cool, capable, college bred, whose gift at well-turned repartee, in replying to the managing editor, had held her income at a fixed point for two years. The great man could not reply to the surgeonlike cuts of Miss Meigs; his

answer back was never to raise her salary. Besides Miss Meigs, there was Mignon Finney, whose specialty was youth. Mignon, with ready tears and a braid of hair turned under and tied with a black bow, could get things out of people. Like the final dove sent from the ark, she always came back with "the story" in her beak. True, some one else had to write it, but few were stony-hearted enough to turn down the near-child as she tearfully told, for the several hundredth time, that it was her first interview.

A third desk revealed the close-cropped head and gray sackcoated back of a man "doing time." Men were put here occasionally—proud, fallen Lucifers that some one was trying to get rid of, or men who had sinned too deeply editorially to be forgiven and who must pass through a penitential period in this humiliating limbo. Few were hardy enough to survive the disgrace of such transplanting, and though the ladies made it a point to be especially nice to these unfortunates, the male peri from the city room invariably emerged a misanthrope.

Subdued "good mornings" were exchanged among the fair, and the journalistically unsexed one gave greetings, something between a grunt and a groan, and went on looking for evidences of increasing anarchy in the exchanges. Personally, he felt anarchistic, and his point of view multiplied the four-line notice of a meeting of these iconoclasts in Hoboken into a far-reaching national movement.

A prolonged buzzing at a push button on Miss Morris' desk that communicated with the managing editor's office signified to the hencoop that "the page" had not found favor in high quarters, or that some assignment requiring feminine intuition or an inside grasp of prevailing fashions, was afoot. If there was need of woman's tears, then Mignon Finney would be called; if an intelligent, sensible story was wanted, then Julia Meigs would brave the elements.

The prime minister of the paper was away. In his place he had left—perhaps to show his scorn of the rest of the cabinet—a nervous youth who tried to create the great man's tension-compelling quality by rumpling his hair and hectically chewing gum. His pose did not deceive the youngest office boy. From time to time, one of the older editors came in and looked at him as one watches the fireman's dog put out

the fire. The youthful managing editor pro tem was pacing the floor, unable to sit from the magnitude of the journalistic scheme working in his brain. Once or twice he tried to stop in his track work, but the wonder of it drove him relentlessly. He held a clipping in his hand from which he read, and after each reading he walked harder.

"Miss Morris, read that!" And the fine frenzy slackened long enough for Jimmy Forsythe to hand over the clipping, which, having been a participant in so much violent emotion, was already as dingy as an emigrant's ticket.

Miss Morris read the single black-faced head:

INGERSOLLIA NOT TO BOW HEAD IN PRAYER.

It was dated Salina, Kansas, and it stated that Mrs. Henry Y. Peachum, a well-known local disciple of the late celebrated agnostic, had by purely social ceremony named her little daughter Ingersollia.

It seemed that little Ingersollia would not be taught to pray like other children. She would be brought up on a modified system of pure reason which had been adapted by her mother from Darwin, Huxley, Comte, Schopenhauer, and Kant. She would never hear the beautiful Christmas story of the Christ Child; she would never make or receive presents at that season; her young heart would never thrill to a reading of "The Night Before Christmas." Mrs. Peachum had spent ten years in compiling the system of philosophy upon which she proposed to rear her daughter. The clipping further stated that local clubwomen were much disturbed over the fate of little Ingersollia, and that Mrs. Peachum was the corresponding secretary of the Salina Literary Club and a woman of wide culture.

"What do you think of that?" Jimmy Forsythe asked.

But he did not wait for her opinion; he had opinion enough for two, and it was that here lay the paper's magnificent chance. Leading clergymen would, of course, protest against the outrage of naming a child Ingersollia and bringing her up like a heathen; clubwomen all over the country would protest; woman's-suffrage societies would protest; fathers, mothers, and little children would protest; so would "doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief." Only Jimmy did not say it in the words of the nursery rhyme; it was not an occasion for frivolity. He had never been more in earnest in all his earnest little life than when he saw pictured on his mental retina members of all classes of society writing letters of protest to the paper, then buying the paper for the delirium of seeing their letters in print.

Jimmy Forsythe would have his salary raised and perhaps get a head-reeling bonus besides; perhaps he would be made an editor permanently; everything was possible if the scheme only took fire the way he had "doped it out." It was to be the paper's great chance to make a place for itself beneath the family reading lamp; to get, in fact, family recognition. For the *Record* was suffering from earlier indiscretions; its daily menu had been too highly spiced for the purely domestic palate; its breakfastable circulation was not large.

Jimmy Forsythe saw himself purging the paper of its sins by means of this wholly refined and highly moral coup. He took a final whirl on the carpet, then faced Miss Morris.

"I want you to go out right away and personally get the leading clergymen of the city of New York to protest, in our columns, about the way that woman intends to bring up her child. Go to St. James, St. Timothy's, Archangels and Zion—all the big, fashionable Episcopal churches that the four hundred attend

—and tell their pastors that our columns are open to them. They can say what they please, over their own signatures, about this outrage. Get the Catholics, too; they're clannish and not much on breaking into print, but they'll protest, all right. Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian, too—get um all. Put your hat right on, and see how many you can get before lunch. We'll publish ten or twelve of the most prominent in tomorrow morning's paper that'll warm things up; then we'll start a 'People's Forum.'"

"But, Mr. Forsythe, you seem to forget I'm editing those two back pages. I've got my proofs to read, my layout to make up. I don't go on assignments any more."

"You're all going out!" Jimmy announced, with Jovian authority. "You can paste your layout on a dummy form and send it to the composing room. You take the Episcopalians, give Miss Finney the Catholics, and Miss Meigs may take the pick of the others. Send her to clergymen who like to argue."

There was not a bit of use debating the question. To press mythology into service, Bancroft, like Apollo, had left the mad boy to drive the fiery chariot of inspiration in his absence; if one valued one's job, there was nothing to do but scramble in and hang on by the tailboard.

Three-quarters of an hour later, when she stepped within the rectory of Archangels and Zion, she was sustained by the thought that the rector was a man first and a clergyman afterward. Of towering height and Herculean build, a story of his mighty prowess as a hunter was good for two columns in any Sunday paper. Other picturesque tales recounted the wholly scientific manner in which he had handled two stevedores who had attempted to interrupt a service at the mission chapel near the docks. He might refuse to protest against the fate of Ingersollia, and in all proba-



'No, I can't do anything; but, by Jove, I owe you something! I've not had a laugh like that in a week.'

bility he would, but he would not be smug about it.

The study in which she waited was pleasantly bookish and shabby. She closed her eyes and tried to draw from these grateful surroundings a little surplus tranquillity on which she would, in all probability, have to draw heavily later in the day. And presently the stairs began to sound under the mighty tread; his voice rang to the rafters, as

he called parting directions to a secretary; and—he towered above her.

Miss Morris was on her feet expounding the dark fate of Ingersollia and explaining that the *Record* placed its columns at his disposal, if he wished to protest. She glanced at the grimy clipping once or twice for data as to Mrs. Peachum's system of pure reason for infants, hesitating to offer personally anything so dingy, but he reached

hungrily for the original, as one who has been put off with an expurgated copy. His eyes devoured it, as a flame eats a page; he wheeled toward the window for a moment, then presented a countenance that seemed to be insured against laughter. But an inner gleam from the reporter's eye caught an under flicker of amusement in one of the clergyman's, and they exchanged a look that had its counterpart only in the glance exchanged by the Roman augurs.

For a second each presented to the other a countenance of hypocritical gravity; then muscles puckered, and loud cachinnations, actual guffaws, burst from his reverence, mingled with a milder crescendo on the part of the girl. He wiped his glasses, his eyes, and again great gusts of laughter came from his barrel organ of a chest, laughter that rocked him like a sapling in a gale.

"Was that in the morning or the afternoon paper? Thanks. I'll send out for it immediately and send it to the bishop. You never saw any one relish a joke like the bishop; that'll keep him going for a week. What was her gloriously ridiculous name? Ingersollia? Couldn't be improved on. And she's to have Schopenhauer and Kant, adapted by her mother! Now, if your editor had only put *that* in his comic supplement, he'd have had something genuinely humorous."

"But aren't you going to protest?"

"My dear young lady, you quite overlook the fact that my position as pastor of Archangels and Zion is an entirely serious one—the dissemination of humor is not part of it. No, I can't do anything; but, by Jove, I owe you something! I've not had a laugh like that in a week."

He shook hands with Miss Morris, as one who had a debt to repay, and she found herself again on the sleety streets, calculating which car would take her nearer to the church of Our Lady The Virgin, which was so high that even Ro-

man Catholics, who sometimes wandered in there by mistake, found themselves unable to follow the service.

The Reverend Samuel Weymiss, the pastor, rather suggested his own church in appearance, his personal architecture inclining toward the Gothic—hair parted over forehead in a towering apex, and a manner that soared away from the young newspaper woman, who, being somewhat disconcerted at her chilling reception, put the case of Ingersollia as quickly as possible.

"And is that all?" "My sermon interrupted for this!" the Gothic eyebrows petulantly proclaimed. "This person has named her child Ingersollia and proposes to teach her what she has been able to crib from certain philosophers, rather than instruct her in religion?"

"Yes, that's it." Miss Morris swallowed nervously.

"Sheer lunacy! Hasn't that paper anything better to do than waste a busy man's time discussing such nonsense?"

"You wouldn't care to say anything?"

"Decidedly not. Good morning." And the door banged alike on the reporter and the fate of Ingersollia.

Miss Morris could never get used to having doors banged. She had a system of stoical philosophy laid up against such a contingency, one of its precepts being that people capable of such vulgarity ought not to have the power of hurting one. But when a door banged, she always felt the same—a trifle weak in the knees—and the houses on the opposite side of the street looked as if she were viewing them through a prism.

The church of St. Peter The Apostle was her next hazard. The pastor, an Englishman who had come from London only a couple of months before, represented to her a wholly unknown quantity. He might prove to be one of those gushing fountains of convictions, doctrines, sentiments, beliefs, views on all subjects, that give to the life of the

reporter his swiftest prey, his easiest money. To get a story, the youngest and greenest of them has only to pull the doorbell.

The English pastor proved to be a brisk and rosilily shaven man of about fifty. He had one of those British voices that conveys a mental impression of a toboggan slide, as their varying intonations boom up and down, seemingly in scallops. He pronounced the syllable "sol" in In-ger-sol-lia the way Italians sing it in the scales.

"And is Inger-soul-lia a common name among you?" And without waiting for Miss Morris to defend her country, to the extent of saying that it was not, he continued: "Extr'ordinary! And is there, perhaps, also a Painiana, after Thomas Paine, the atheist?"

Miss Morris denied Painiana, even as she had denied Ingersollia, but apparently the Reverend Mr. Majoribanks did not hear her. He kept right on constructing feminine terminations on the names of historical unbelievers, such as Voltairia, Renania, Strausstina, and then answering himself with "How extr'ordinary!" Miss Morris had heard old newspaper men tell how that famous Chinaman, Li Hung Chang, would turn the tables on a reporter and interview him, but the tactics of the pastor of St. Peter The Apostle were even more startling. He would propound a question, answer it self, then furnish an explosive "How extr'ordinary!" as if it had all happened in perfectly good faith. Time and time again the woman reporter attempted to convince the Reverend Mr. Majoribanks that there were no such names in America as those he was foisting upon the country, but he seemed delighted with the process and could not stop himself.

Finally despairing of accomplishing anything otherwise, Miss Morris dashed in upon his "rosebud garden of girls" that never existed with the same old

offer of the columns of the *Record* for a protest.

"But why should I protest against the customs of your country? I'm not an American. I think it would be a piece of gratuitous discourtesy on my part."

"But it's not the custom of the country, really," explained Miss Morris, struggling with the asperity she could hardly control at his persistent belief in his own fantasy.

"But it will become the custom of the country as soon as you publish that. The publication of anything—murders, crimes, eccentricities, names, marriages in balloons—is always followed by a host of imitators, the effect of auto-suggestion on weak minds. John Stuart Mill, now—his name will furnish them with considerable difficulty. So will that of Spinoza—"

"But wouldn't you protest merely on æsthetic grounds? The names are so ugly," she suggested, in desperation.

"Oh, I shouldn't think of protesting on any grounds. You know the curious customs of the States are not my concern. Now what would you think of Shelleyana? Ah, we've changed our opinion of Shelley, haven't we?"

With brilliant rapid-fire, he discharged five or six more names, built upon the surnames of doubting Thomases, more or less remote.

It was becoming contagious. Miss Morris began to think of wildly fanciful names, names that promised to haunt her days and nights; names that, as producers of madness, were equal to the famous "blue trip slip" jingle. She did not dare trust herself a moment longer, but dashed down the rectory steps with visions of the psychopathic ward of Bellevue looming menacingly.

The next clergyman sent word through his secretary that he had nothing to say for publication. The next, on hearing that she was a reporter, kept a nervous eye on the dining-room silver,



"I—I've n-never had such a—a—time in my l-life," wailed Mignon dismally.

lavishly displayed on the sideboard. The fate of Ingersollia did not seem to him apparently as precarious as that of his spoons. "Nothing to say," was his ultimatum. The next clergyman was at Lakewood; the next was out. Miss Morris took the elevated back to Park Row, wondering what the fate of her colleagues had been.

Miss Meigs was in one of her white,

still fits of rage. She had taken degrees, she spoke languages; so when she was sent on an assignment that she felt was unworthy of her intelligence, she had a way of barricading herself behind a white, inaccessible wall of anger.

"Well," began Miss Morris, in the words of the unsuccessful reporters' ritual, "if there's an Episcopal doorstep in Greater New York from which I've not been thrown, let it now come forth or forever after hold its peace."

The male peri was out to lunch, and for a moment there was no response from either of the young women; then sobs, real sobs made up of a succession of wrenching gulps, with little, breath-catching cries in between, came from Mignon Finney's desk. And with the sobs were the unbecoming concomitants of red eyelids and a swollen nose, utterly unlike

Mignon's usual highly becoming display of property woe.

"I—I've n-never had such a—a—time in my l-life," wailed Mignon dismally. "N-no one would g-give me a word; n-no one would protest about I-in-ger-sollia. And when I—I—told one priest that it was m-my first assignment, he congratulated me on having discovered the secret of stopping time in its flight

—said he gave me an interview two years ago for that very reason." She speared on her hat and went out to lunch.

Miss Meigs did not speak till the door closed on Miss Finney; then she turned on Miss Morris such a look as Napoleon might have given after Waterloo.

"This is the end." I intend to resign and go into magazine work. Actually, they hooted at the idea, some of them! As if they didn't see through Jimmy Forsythe's little game of getting them to stick their heads into the paper's sand! But all the ostriches declined."

"Well," said Miss Morris, patting her smoothly brushed hair, "I'll go and report to the bright boy that as far as the clergymen of New York are concerned, Ingersollia may enjoy her name, and her mother's system of pure reason for infants, undisturbed."

Jimmy Forsythe received the news with head-rumpling despair; he wanted to, but didn't quite dare to say that the reason they had all "fallen down" on the assignment was because they had gone about it all wrong. They had not made the clergymen feel that to protest against Mrs. Peachum's ethics for infants was a sacred responsibility.

"Get your lunch and we'll make a fresh start! There are other people in this town who won't sit quietly while this woman robs her child of its birth-right."

Jimmy lit a fresh cigarette, took an oblong turn upon the floor, and again rumbled his hair. But these classic editorial calisthenics were not for the purpose of soothing his nerves, but to warm his cold feet. Jimmy saw his splendid Arabian Nights dream of the increase of salary and the bonus fade away if these women couldn't stir up something. "We'll get society women to protest. You can get um through the 'Wards of the King.' They can make their signed statements strong as they please.

We'll print them. All the women of the four hundred belong to that organization. They have committee rooms on Eighty-fifth Street. Find um in the telephone book. Start right out. Miss Meigs may go to the women's suffrage headquarters. Miss Finney to Brooklyn women's clubs."

The spiritual and mundane affairs of the "Wards of the King" occupied an entire house, furnished with suave austerity in the subdued colors of the guild, in a neighborhood that real-estate agents term "select." The page who opened the door told Miss Morris that several ladies were in the meditation room and could not be disturbed, but that the secretary would see her in her office.

The first glimpse of the office was reassuring to the unlucky news fisher, who had been letting down her net all day and had caught nothing. It was essentially a well-bred room, with no jarring notes. The pictures on the walls were brown reproductions of the best Italian art. The furniture, in the Jacobean period, was excellent; so was the color scheme. So was the excessively fat lady, smiling as a "Ward of the King" should smile, with sisterly gentleness and encouragement. Reassuring also was the well-cleared lunch tray from which the secretary had evidently partaken of a succulent and substantial meal.

With that trick of the trained reporter of grasping information from apparently every source but that under observation, Miss Morris saw that the squatty teapot was quart size, that the telltale chop bones were four in number, that the toast must have been equally plentiful, as there were two pieces left.

"Thank God, she has been fed, and fed well!" Miss Morris murmured in a wordless prayer of thanksgiving, knowing how often the unstanching flow of wordy conviction depends upon these grossly material things.

For perhaps the tenth time that morning, Miss Morris set forth the fate of Ingersollia, who would be uncheered by Christian upbringing, and all that went with it. She had poured the tale into so many ears that she felt, as she recited it one time more, that she must avoid the note of the "barker" that her voice might be acquiring from constantly reiterating Mrs. Henry Y. Peachum's system of pure reason for infants and the appalling name with which she proposed to launch her own.

The fat secretary—who rather suggested a billowing sea that had become petrified, from the multitude of chins resting on an undulation of chest, which in turn rested upon an abdominal undulation—spoke at last, in a deep bass voice that would have commanded a fabulous figure at the Metropolitan.

"No, my dear, I can't say anything about that silly woman. The 'Wards' would never forgive me if I let the guild's name get into that sensational paper. I'm sorry to refuse you." The bass voice came up through the fleshy billows like the voice of a diver speaking from the depths of the sea; its accents were genuinely kindly. "You look such a nice, wholesome girl, and it's shocking weather to be going about, but it would be as much as my position was worth even to speak to any of the ladies about it."

Miss Morris was upon her feet, preparing to face the weather again, but as she bowed to the kindly disposed secretary, that lady caught her hand and said: "Now, my dear, I want you to remember one thing—you have a friend in me, and any time life on that sporting paper becomes too hard for you, and you feel that you can't stand it another moment, why, just come here to my private office and put your head down on this desk and have a good cry!"

Perhaps the weary reporter might have taken immediate advantage of the stout lady's offer, her sense of discour-

agement at that moment was so complete; but the mental picture of her presenting herself at the "L" window and cold-bloodedly buying a ticket, for the purpose of hurtling to Eighty-fifth Street to shed tears upon the sympathetic mahogany of the secretarial desk, was too much. The humor of the situation again saved the day, and, promising the secretary to come for the long-distance cry when she needed it, Miss Morris departed.

It was now well into the afternoon, and if anything was to be accomplished that day, she could spend no more time going back to Park Row to report the chilling indifference on every side to the fate of Ingersollia. Consulting her watch, she went to the nearest telephone booth and called up the author of the great scheme.

The voice that answered her was full of disappointment, shot through with despair. Unmindful of the rate per minute at which public telephones are rented, he launched forth an essay on the tactics of journalism. It was his business to conceive the schemes—or many of them, he hastily amended—that had given the paper its hold upon the hearts and brains of the people. Reporters were necessary for the carrying out of these schemes, and when they failed—"as all of you, Miss Meigs, Miss Finney, and yourself have failed"—what was the use of conceiving "features" full of human interest, "features" that took right hold of the hearts of the people?

As his voice went booming on, Miss Morris wondered which of two classic similitudes he would employ in commenting on their failure—the irritating grain of sand that clogged the giant mechanism of the smoothly running ship of journalism, or that older figure of the soldier in the ranks being sent forth by the general. And even while she mentally speculated, the parable of the general and the private won. What



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could the commanding general of a great army accomplish if the soldiery did not carry out orders? But Miss Morris, who remembered the now god-like Jimmy Forsythe as "falling down" on one assignment after another only a few months before, when he had been a reporter on the Sunday edition, felt that any further patience with Jimmy and his new toy would be positively vicious.

"You quite forget one thing, Mr. Forsythe, in employing that old, reliable, journalistic simile, and that is the unwillingness of the public to coöperate in

schemes that it regards as utterly idiotic and declines to consider on the grounds that it is not in the vaudeville business. No priest, levite, minister of the gospel, layman, clubwoman, Colonial Dame, or 'Ward of the King' that any of us has seen up to date cares a hang about Mrs. Peachum's system of infant ethics or the ridiculous name she proposes to foist upon her child. So what boots the plan of mighty general and the long-distance sprinting of humble recruit? It's up to the public, and if the public won't be interviewed, it won't!"

Miss Morris breathed the sigh of relief that comes from having spoken one's mind. It might cost her her job, but it was worth it.

The phone at the other end of the line recorded an untranslatable sound; there was absolute silence for a moment or two; then the voice of Jimmy came from an altitude distinctly less rarified, the voice of one who has dismounted from a high horse and is taking account of his saddle galls.

"For God's sake, get some one to protest! I phoned the chief about it, and he told me to go ahead."

"Will you stand for protests from the Mammoth Emporium?"

"Is that the best we can do?" Jimmy's plural pronoun spoke more eloquently of his change of heart than a sermon would have done. "We'll have to take them if we can't get any one else. The pictures are made, heads written, layout all ready. I'll send Miss Meigs and Miss Finney over to Brooklyn to get the Fulton Street stores. We'll have to make it a righteous uprising of the honest working girl. Please hurry, Miss Morris," said the chastened Mr. Forsythe politely.

The Mammoth Emporium was a huge department store, the focal point of which was a papier-mâché grotto where a jungle of cambric palms, ferns, and flowers bloomed to the singing of caged canary birds. Here the purchasers of "anything above fifty cents' worth" ate the ice cream that the pink coupon entitled them to eat amid these sylvan scenes. Wearied contestants from bargain-counter athletic matches rested here while awaiting their second wind. Bands—stringed, wind, Hungarian, and penny-in-the-slot—met in violent concussions of sound from all quarters of the building. From the various "Looney suites" in the furniture department, musical horns of plenty gave forth vocal shavings from the Metropolitan.

Crowds that resembled men automata were sweeping up and down the moving stairways; flying wedges formed and bore down on bargain tables where "three-hour sales" were in progress; the Mammoth, from needle counter to touring-car garage, presented the frantic activity of an uncovered ant hive.

Miss Morris edged her way through the throngs of shoppers, secured a crowded passage in an elevator, and a moment later was in quest of Miss Leah Goldstein, the buyer of what was pretty generally called in the Mammoth the "linge-e-ray" department. Miss Morris had been acquainted with the enterprising buyer of lingerie since her earliest initiation as a reporter on the *Record*. Miss Goldstein did not draw her large salary for leaving things to chance, and when the advertising department of the paper awarded the Mammoth a reading notice on the woman's page, Miss Goldstein went personally to the *Record* with her chat about "milady's latest fancies."

In instances like the present, where every grade of society had determined not to be interviewed, Miss Goldstein had before this proved herself invaluable. She was willing to talk for publication on any subject from the fourth dimension to the decadence of the muslin petticoat. Furthermore, she had the signatures of every one in her department at command. In starting a symposium of public opinion, Miss Goldstein and her assistants stood in the same relation to the *Record* as decoy ducks to the hunter.

Again Miss Morris told the dark fate menacing Ingersollia. Not only was she to go through life bearing that un-Christian name, but she would not bow her head in prayer and never hear the beautiful story of the Christ Child.

"Ain't that sumpun fierce? To think of any woman bringing her child up like that! Say, how many signatures do you want?"

"About a dozen will do very nicely."

"Gents or ladies? Say, there's one or two men in this department with the very latest in names—Percy deForrest is our aisle man, and Cecil Wentworth is doing our lingeray displays in the window. They'd be dandy names to lead with."

"No, we decided not to have men. This is to be a spontaneous uprising of working girls."

"Well, you can get workin' girls to burn here. Say, Sadie! Sadie!" to the vanishing form of a cash girl. "Tell Becky Aronson, Rachel Saks, Freda Rosenblum, and the Levi sisters I want um, and I want um quick, here."

The bevy came in, giggling. They had seen Miss Morris, and knew from experience that they were again to stand in the fierce, white light that beats upon a daily paper.

"Now, look here, ain't this sumpun fierce? Here's a woman out to Kansas whose goin' to christen her child after Bob Ingersoll, and that kid ain't goin' to be let say her prayers, or believe in Christ, or go to Sunday school, or know

that Christmas is His birthday. What do you think of that?"

"Fierce!" they chorused.

"Well, you ain't goin' to sit still while that's goin' on, are you?" Reassured by their giggling negative, she continued: "Well, this lady will write pieces in the paper that you think it's turrible for that woman to bring up her child like that, and she'll put your names to it, 'cause grammer's awful to get tangled up in. But you'll see your names in the paper, and every one reading um on the 'L.'"

They saw, giggled, and departed. Miss Morris turned to the buyer and expressed her deep sense of obligation, particularly, she went on to say, as Miss Goldstein could have no personal convictions on the subject of Ingersollia's un-Christian name and upbringing.

The buyer of the lingerie department darted a look at the reporter that dissolved in the astute smile of one whose Alma Mater is the world.

"Convictions?" she scoffed. "In business, Miss Morris, there are no convictions."



The Slander

I WILL not listen to Love's slanderers,
Nor let their musty, dusty saws dismay
My heart when in monotonous array,
Like letter-learned parrot choristers,
In the same words they iterate their slurs
And drone that great loves die before the day
While lesser loves live on. I turn away,
And tell my heart that all their saying errs.

In meadows where the waving grass grows long,
And in green orchards, little birds build nests.
Slain for their plumage, prisoned for their song,
They perish; while above the mountain crests,
Beyond the shot and snare, ageless and strong,
The eagle on his steady pinions rests.

GENEVIEVE WIMSATT.

A Rough Lesson

By Charles Garvice

Author of "Where Love Leads," "Felton's Luck," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

MIND, I don't hold a brief for Ralph Bryanstone, and I can quite understand that a number of persons, more or less good, would call him a brute. Of course there were the law courts and other things he could have appealed to without resorting to physical violence; but law courts and other things were not in Ralph's way, and—— However, I will just tell the story, and the reader can form his own opinion.

When Ralph told me he was going to marry Maisie Marston, I was rather surprised, and just a little doubtful. You see, he was rather a great man in his way, in his country way, a large landowner, first-rate M. F. H., good all-round sportsman—in fact, a county magnate of the best type; and Maisie was the daughter of a retired solicitor, a sweetly pretty girl, also a nice one, with charming little, mousey ways, and a little wistful droop at the corners of her mouth. Oh, yes, there was plenty of excuse for Ralph's infatuation. Of course his family called it an infatuation, and the male members prefixed an adjective. For, charming and sweet and lovable as Maisie Marston was, she was not exactly Ralph's class, as Miss Connie Ediss would put it.

However, Ralph was head of the family, his own master, and free to marry whom he pleased. So he married Maisie. I was best man, and yielded to none in my admiration of the bride, whose picture in the ladies' pa-

pers, beautiful as it was, failed to do her justice; and I went down and stayed with them when they returned from their honeymoon.

Strangely enough, Lady Bryanstone did not regard me with the disfavor with which young married ladies usually view their husbands' bachelor friends. The fact is that I am a somewhat discreet and careful person—though when Percy Black says that I am possessed of more than a man's usual share of low cunning, he does me an injustice. In this case I had sense enough not to monopolize Ralph's attention or company, and to efface myself whenever it seemed desirable to do so. Then Lady Bryanstone could see that I admired her—of course she could; they always can. To my intense satisfaction, for I was fond of Ralph, the young couple seemed to get along very well, and I left them after this first visit quite happy about them.

But when I went down later, for the shooting, I saw that a change had taken place. To put it shortly, Lady Bryanstone seemed a bit bored. Ralph loved her just as badly—that's scarcely the way to put it—as devotedly as ever, but he was not a demonstrative man; and, beyond their mutual affection, they had not much in common.

The life of a country squire sufficed him; he did not want anything outside it, or the circle of friends of his own rank and position, who led the same kind of life that he did and looked up

to him as their chief. Not a bad kind of chief, anyway—a man good to look at, good to be with, one of the best; one of those simple-natured men who go straight through life without swerving from the clean and wholesome path—not so much because they have been taught to do so as because it is their way, and has been the way of their people before them.

Maisie knew nothing of sport, and did not care for it, and she could not get up any interest in Farmer Giles' new roof, the draining of the old marsh, the training of puppies or the felling of trees. How should she? Hers was a pleasure-loving nature—she loved gayety, new frocks, and all the things that a young girl sets her heart upon; and it bored her to death to have to sit and listen to Ralph's talk of the aforesaid roof, marsh, and stupid old trees. Ralph, though by no means clever, was no fool; he saw what was the matter, and he allowed her—in fact, told her—to fill the house.

The grange is a grand old place; and there was, of course, no difficulty in getting people. It was rather a mixed lot. There were Ralph's old friends, keen sportsmen like himself, and their wives and daughters; there were also some members of the smart set—the usual skittish matrons, the loud-voiced, skylarking girls, and the silly young men who think it the correct thing to laugh and sneer at the things they learned at their mothers' knees, and to hold women cheap.

Among these men was a

certain Arthur Rayne; he was a good-looking young fellow, rather too effeminate for my taste—but then I am hopelessly old-fashioned—but the women admired him immensely. He had soft little ways, a voice that the old novelists would have called seductive, hands so deftly manicured that they were like a woman's, and an assurance for which the women were answerable. He was well connected and rich; in short, he was the type of young man you meet wherever the smart set do congregate.



There was silence for a moment or two; then he said in a voice that, low as it was, made me chill: "What's the man's name?"

I don't know much about it, but I believe that the *raison d'être* of these people is that they should be in love all the time—though not necessarily with one person all the time; in fact, you are not of much account unless you can change the object of your passionate devotion pretty nearly as often as you get your hair cut.

It pleased the exquisite Arthur to fall in love with his hostess. He could play the part of the passionate lover extremely well—he had had a great deal of experience—but at first he found Maisie rather difficult, for she had not, as yet, acquired the rules of the game.

He hung about her with something of the motions and the eyes of a Blenheim spaniel. He was her companion in most of the walks and drives, the excursions and picnics; he leaned against the piano and watched her, with a languishing expression, as she sang. He never joined in the chorus of genuine appreciation—Maisie had a nice little voice—but just looked at her and sighed. He pressed her hand when he helped her into the dogcart, put her¹ on her horse, danced with her, and, on one pretext or another, he was always contriving to get her alone with him.

Maisie was a little startled at first, but presently she got to like it. You see, she saw the other men carrying on the same game with the other women, and remarked that the other women took it as a matter of course; so she thought she might do the same. Before a week had passed, everybody in the house was aware of the flirtation. Some of Ralph's old friends were annoyed; but, of course, the smart set were amused and delighted.

When I said everybody, I ought to have excepted Ralph himself; he was the only one who appeared to be unaware of what was going on. But if he had noticed it, he would not have been affected; it would never have occurred to him to be even incipiently jealous of

such a man as Arthur Rayne. With Ralph, to love a woman was to trust her. Maisie's kittenish little ways were a delight to him, and to see her bright and happy made him also bright and happy. He remained blind even when Rayne and Maisie took to lingering on the terrace or in one of the small rooms by themselves after most of the other people had gone up to their rooms.

The party broke up, and the Bryanstones fell back into their quiet life. Maisie grew dull and dispirited; said she wanted a change; thought she would like to go to London. Ralph assented at once.

"Why, of course, dear," he said. "There's the house in Audley Street. We'll go up there for a bit, do the theaters, and have a high old time. It's only natural you should feel dull shut up in this old place, with only a stupid husband to talk to."

He put his arm around her and pressed her to him as he went out to the gun room; and the little idiot sat down and wrote to Arthur Rayne that she had managed it, and was coming to London.

For such people as the Bryanstones, there was, of course, a warm welcome. Cards were showered upon Maisie from the best people, but Maisie did not want the best people; she wanted the smart set and Arthur Rayne. For, fascinated by that gentleman's "passionate devotion," she had persuaded herself that she was in love with him.

All the beautiful talk about the affinity of souls, the sweet sympathy of a deep and unselfish love, that Arthur managed so nicely, was quite new to Maisie, and it contrasted so vividly with Ralph's solid style of conversation that it seemed something infinitely convincing and precious. She told herself she had never really lived till now; that a new existence was opening to her, and all that kind of rot.

Of course Arthur availed himself of

the opportunity she had given him by following his beck and call to London. He was with her every day, went about with her everywhere; the sighing, the hand pressing, the whispering went on under circumstances that permitted Arthur more scope than he had enjoyed at the grange. People were talking very freely, but still Ralph saw nothing, and went on his genial, jolly, happy-go-lucky way undisturbed. One would have thought that among his own friends some man or woman would have had courage and friendship enough to drop a word in season, but no one did so. It is an awkward thing to go to a man and tell him that his wife is making a fool of herself.

This is how Lady Headon, a cousin of Ralph's, put it when she spoke to me about it. Lady Headon and I have been good friends for some years; in fact, when she was Lucy Vansittart, she and I—— But I am only a second son and a struggling barrister, and Lucy Vansittart was as far above my reach as the stars. But we are still good friends; and she proves her friendship by coming to me when she is in any little trouble and wants advice—which she does not always take.

"I like Maisie," she said, "and I don't



She stifled a sharp cry, and turned the letter over on the blotting pad. Then she rose and stared at him, for she saw that he knew.

believe there's a bit of harm in her. She doesn't know the ropes, that's what's the matter; and she's caught by Arthur Rayne's ladylike little ways. I hate them myself. I like a man who spells m-a-n; a man with an object in life; a man who faces the music and doesn't fool around; who sticks to one woman, even if he can't get her."

"Thank you very much," I said. "Excuse these tears, but this unsolicited testimonial moves me deeply."

She had the grace to blush.

"Don't talk nonsense," she said. "I wasn't thinking of you. But about Maisie. It's going a little too far. They carried on at our place last night, and George swore about it. As if I could help it! Some one will have to speak to Ralph."

"I know of no one better fitted for the task than his favorite cousin, Lucy," I said blandly.

She shook her head. "Not a bit of good. He would only laugh at me, or catch me by the shoulders and chuck me out of the room. No; you will have to do it."

I trust I looked as aghast as I felt.

"I shall have to get you to excuse me," I said. "It's true that Ralph and I are old and great pals, but that's no reason why I should be laid up in hospital with several broken limbs. I'm fully sensible of the honor conveyed in your proposal, but circumstances compel me to decline it. One of the circumstances is that I am a constitutional coward——"

"You a coward!" Lady Headon was good enough to say. "Do you think I have forgotten the way you stopped that horse of mine when it bolted in front of the gravel pit?"

"I've quite forgotten the incident to which you allude," I said; "but that only proves my folly, not my courage."

"Oh, you're not going to get out of it like this!" she declared. "You must speak to Ralph, and at once."

I knew by experience that further protestation would be useless; for, protest as I may, I invariably do everything this lady requires of me. So, with sorrow and misgiving, I consented; merely stipulating that she should come and see me at the hospital on visiting days. She promised, with a laugh, but assured me that there was no cause for my anxiety; that Ralph was the best-tempered, most easy-going of men, and would take the whole thing quietly and sensibly. I

had my doubts about that, but I got my hat and went round to Audley Street.

It was in the afternoon, early. Sir Ralph was out, the footman told me, with evident sincerity; he added, with obviously less sincerity, that Lady Bryanstone was out also. I said I would wait, and went in. I am like a tame cat about all Ralph's houses, and I wandered into the library to get a book, and to think over what I should say. Behind the library is a little room Maisie calls her own. I fancied I heard the faint rustle of a silken underskirt, but, of course, I was not surprised. Maisie was at liberty to be "not at home" if she chose.

Presently Ralph came in. He had been to a meeting of the committee of the Four-in-hand Club, was smoking a big black cigar, and looked so handsome, so fit—— Well, I thought of Hyperion and the satyr.

"Hello, old chap!" he said. "Had your lunch? Have a cigar? I say, what's the matter? You look as if you'd lost sixpence. Any worry on?"

"Not about myself, but about a pal," I said. "No, it's not money; it's about his wife."

Ralph sat astride a chair and nodded.

"It's this way," I said, realizing how great a fool I was to yield to the blandishments of the woman I once had loved: "She's young, and she's got into bad company—smart set, you know."

Ralph nodded. "Silly kind of crew," he said. "Seem to me like a parcel of naughty children, who ought to be whipped and put to bed. I don't see much of them, and I shouldn't mind seeing less; but Maisie has taken up with some of the gang. They amuse her, I suppose, and——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"Naughty children do harm sometimes," I said. "For instance, my pal's wife has got herself talked about with the most notorious and fascinating of the silly crew, and——" I paused.

"What's the husband about?" inquired Ralph.

"He doesn't know," I said. "You see, he's very fond of his wife, and he's a decent, straight chap, and has every confidence in her."

"Somebody had better give him the tip," remarked Ralph.

"Y-e-s," I said. "I have been requested by a mutual friend to do so—and I'm doing it."

Ralph rose from the chair, knocked the ash from his cigar, and looked straight at the opposite wall. There was silence for a moment or two; then he said, in a voice that, low as it was, made me chill:

"What's the man's name?"

"Arthur Rayne," I said. "Look here, Ralph, it's only foolishness. There's no harm——"

"Thanks, old man," he cut in sternly. "I don't want any man to tell me that my wife is—— It was good of you to come to me. Let's get outside. It's hot in here, isn't it?"

As a matter of fact, it was rather chilly. In the hall he asked the footman if his mistress were in.

"Her ladyship said I was to tell you, Sir Ralph, that she and Lady Headon have gone to Prince's this afternoon."

As the man spoke, I heard a faint froufrou on the landing above, and I knew that Ralph also heard it. Outside, he said to me:

"Lucy went to her grandmother's this morning. I saw her off at the station."

We walked into the park; cheerful place on a drizzly afternoon in November! Ralph was silent, his face set, with a look upon it not good to see. Presently he stopped short and said:

"I'm going back. You go on."

I caught his arm. "You won't——"

He looked above my head, as if he didn't hear me, shook off my cautionary hand, and strode away in the mist.

Never mind how I learned what followed. I got a bit from each of the

actors in the scene, put it together, and easily surmised the rest.

Ralph returned to the house, went straight to the little room behind the library, and found Maisie at the table, writing a letter. She turned at the sound of his footsteps, stifled a sharp cry, and turned the letter over on the blotting pad. Then she rose and stared at him, for she saw that he knew.

Before either of them could speak, there was a soft footfall in the hall, the door opened noiselessly, and Arthur Rayne's dulcet voice said, in a whisper: "Are you there, Maisie, dearest?"

Ralph signed to his wife not to speak; the door opened, and Arthur Rayne came in. When he saw Ralph, his face went as white as Maisie's, and he looked sharply from one to the other.

"You have an appointment with Lady Bryanstone, Mr. Rayne?" said Ralph. "You have something to say to her? Do you mind saying it in my presence?"

Arthur Rayne grew red.

"Lady Bryanstone was kind enough to say that she would go to tea with me at the new rooms."

"Quite so," said Ralph. "And you have been considerate enough to bring your motor car and some luggage?"

Maisie uttered a stifled cry, caught up the letter she had been writing, and, with a shaking hand, extended it to Ralph; she was too terrified to speak. Ralph glanced at the letter.

"This appears to be intended for Mr. Rayne," he said, handing the letter to him.

Rayne took it with a hand that he endeavored to keep steady, read the letter with changing color; then, shrugging his shoulders, thrust it into his pocket.

"Well?" said Ralph grimly.

Rayne smiled, it was rather a ghastly smile.

"A letter evidently written under compulsion," he said.

It was a foolish speech, even for such a fool, and it was the proverbial last



"Get us a cab; then drag the car off to the nearest garage. Here's my card."

straw. Ralph raised his hand and caught him and held him off as a man might hold a child. struck him across the lips.

Rayne went for him, but Ralph "You want to fight, of course?" he

said. "You shall. Go and sit down, Maisie; and don't cry out. I say, don't cry out."

He turned the key in the door. The fight commenced. Of course, Arthur Rayne was no match for a man like Ralph; but he took his punishment well and uttered no cry, until, after a few minutes—one might almost say moments—he went down with a thud, which indicated that his senses had been knocked out of him.

Maisie had obeyed Ralph's injunction for the simple reason that she was incapable of uttering a sound. She was frozen, paralyzed, by the awful scene. She tried to shut it out with her hands, but the horror of it forced her to look on with distended eyes, with white, strained lips. She did not even cry out when Rayne went down; she glanced at him for a moment, then her eyes turned to her husband with a strange expression.

It was at this psychological moment that I returned. I had seen by Ralph's face that he was going back to make trouble, and I had hoped that I should be in time to prevent it. He let me into the room, and I saw that I was too late.

"Have you—killed him?" I asked, as I knelt beside the crumpled-up Lovelace.

"Oh, no!" said Ralph. "There's some brandy in that cupboard. Pull him round—and take him away."

I got some brandy through the man's lips, and presently he came to. He was an awful object to look at. I went for water and a sponge, and wiped his no longer beautiful face.

Maisie had risen from her chair and was leaning against a bookcase, her hands gripping her dress, her eyes still fixed on Ralph with that strange expression. Ralph had taken out a cigar, and was lighting it with a perfectly steady hand; the knuckles were bleeding, but there was no mark on his face.

"Come, pull yourself together," I said to Rayne, "and I will see you home."

As I took his arm and was helping him to the door, Maisie pointed to his pocket.

"The letter! The letter!" she gasped.

I took it out and held it out to her; but she shook her head, and said faintly:

"Read it!"

There is no need to give that piteous letter *in extenso*. She had repented at the last moment, and had written to tell Arthur Rayne that she found she could not fly with him; and, strangely enough for a woman, she had had the courage to give a reason—she loved her husband. I had no sooner read the letter than she fainted; and I had the intense satisfaction, as I led Rayne out, of seeing Ralph take her in his arms and hold her tightly to his breast.

But of course I saw that the trouble had not ended here. There would be a pretty how-d'ye-do. The newspapers would be full of it—"Fracas in South Audley Street"—with Maisie's reputation blasted, and her life and Ralph's both ruined.

"You've done a pretty day's work, confound you!" I remarked to Rayne.

"Take me home," he said, with a groan. "My car is round that corner."

The sight of the car gave me an idea. I haven't had many ideas in my life, and I may, therefore, be excused for being rather proud of this one. I bundled Rayne into the car and took the driving seat; there was no chauffeur.

It was a filthy night, and no one could have recognized us; besides, Rayne cowered down almost at the bottom of the car and covered his battered face with a rug. I drove at a good pace through the larger streets into some of the quieter and less frequented ones at the back of and beyond Oxford Street. Here there were very few peo-

ple about, and, seizing my opportunity, I ran the blessed car up against a lamp-post. The car went over and chucked us both out, and we had the stage to ourselves for a few minutes, until a bobby, who had heard the infernal clatter, came striding up to us.

"You have had an awful smash, sir!"

"Yes, we have," I said. "And I am afraid my friend is rather badly hurt."

"Yes, indeed, sir. The poor gentleman seems to have caught it in the face. Shall I take him to the hospital?"

"No, no," I replied, for Rayne had struggled to his feet and seemed to have acquired no additional injury. "Get us a cab; then drag the car off to the nearest garage. Here's my card."

It was accompanied by a five-pound note. The bobby got a four-wheeler, and I took Rayne home, and delivered him into the hands of his valet, marked "Damaged in transit."

Then it occurred to me that I had a most unpleasant pain in my left arm, and I shrewdly suspected that I had broken it. The doctor verified this suspicion, and I also went to bed.

Soon after the arm was set, Ralph came round. He looked grave, but by no means unhappy.

"What on earth are you doing here?" he asked.

"Taking a rest," I said. "I'm not used to bullfights, and they upset me. How is Lady Bryanstone?"

His lips quivered, and a tender look came into his eyes.

"She, too, has gone to bed," he said; "but she's all right. Thank God it has turned out as it has! But I'm in a terrible fix, old chap. Of course, everybody will hear of the affair. That fellow is marked for another fortnight. There'll be a scandal!"

"I don't know about a scandal," I said. "Rayne's not the only man who has come to grief with a motor car."

"What do you mean?" asked Ralph.

"Oh, haven't you heard?" I replied.

"Rayne was good enough to take me for a ride this afternoon; and the beastly thing skidded and rammed a lamp-post. It was my fault, for I was driving. Rayne has got his face knocked about pretty badly, but that's all that's the matter with him."

Ralph looked at me with swift comprehension; then they turned sharply to the bedclothes under which my left arm lay concealed.

"And you?" he asked anxiously.

"Only a broken arm," I said resignedly; "and I certainly deserve it. 'They who in quarrels interpose,' you know."

Ralph got hold of my other hand and pressed it. He was good enough to say that I was a brick—I felt very much like one at that moment!—that he could not thank me, but that Maisie would understand, and do so.

She came round next morning, and, of course, she cried; but they were happy tears, notwithstanding that she was full of remorse on account of what she called my "heroic suffering."

Another lady came to see me. She was very angry, and declared that my assertion that the motor-car mishap was a sheer accident was as foolish as it was mendacious.

"As for that little idiot, Maisie—I must say, though I am fond enough of her, that I don't think she's worth it."

"I dare say not," I assented, with a sigh. "No woman is worth any man's broken arm, to say nothing of his heart."

She sighed, shook her head, and laid her hand, soft as thistledown, on my injured arm; and she did not remove the hand when her husband came in; why should she?

Ralph and Maisie are a particularly happy couple. She worships her husband, and every now and then I see in her eyes the expression they wore at the moment when Rayne went down.

By the way, she has quite chucked the smart set.

New Faces for Old

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

IN taking up the subject of rejuvenating old faces, too much stress cannot be laid upon maintaining the character of the face; it is character that gives it individuality. Many mistake the lines of the face for blemishes and endeavor to remove them. "There is nothing more indicative of character than lines, unless it be the absence of them."

The lines of the face are distinct from the wrinkles in that they are present at birth or soon after, whereas wrinkles do not make their appearance until thought and emotion have left their impress upon the features. One of the principal lines, and one that is seen on every face, is that which leads downward from the nostrils to the corners of the mouth. Another prominent line is that which runs down the center of the upper lip; there are two of these, and they are extremely revealing of the characteristics underlying them.

There are other lines in the face, but these instances are sufficient to show that such lines cannot be effaced; and if they do not lend beauty to the countenance, that is a fault of the traits which they indicate. One may as well endeavor to rub off the face as to make any impression upon these lines. Wrinkles, sagging tissues, old skin, and

other evidences of age, neglect, poor health, and the like are another story.

Few persons are born with wrinkles upon the face. It is sometimes seen. Few young people develop wrinkles unless they are possessed of much capacity for emotion or reflection, or through ill health are subjected to much suffering. Wrinkles usually make their first appearance at the outer corners of the eyes, and are almost always caused by mirth and an agreeable temperament. It is a mistake to suppose that wrinkles always indicate advanced years, or to attribute ugliness to them. Some wrinkles, on the contrary, serve to reveal beauty of the mind and heart and add much attractiveness to the face. It has often been noted that sometimes people quite plain in youth grow handsome with age—it is because beauty of character has been outlined upon their faces. It takes *time* to form wrinkles, whether good or bad; but it must be remembered that youth is not the only season for beauty.

A smooth, unwrinkled countenance in an adult resembles that of an infant and indicates an absence of *feeling*; such a countenance is cold, selfish, shallow. There is an old saying that "gray hairs are honorable," and we might add that wrinkles, provided they are in the

right place, do honor to the countenance by revealing goodness.

Now women—and men, too, but they are more subtle about it—have from the earliest times sought beauty; women especially seek beauty of the face. Fortunes are yearly expended upon all sorts of treatments and cosmetics that may add to or bring about a pleasing transformation in this respect.

From the foregoing remarks, it will be noted that many of these efforts are futile—that lines, for instance, cannot be removed, and that a smooth, un-wrinkled skin in adult years is undesirable. This explains the frightful disappointment of many women, who, after being subjected to heroic beauty treatment, such as skinning the face, observe that the new skin does not harmonize with the expression beneath it; that the bland baby cuticle, all smooth, shiny, and pink and white, is grotesque, as it does not blend with the hair or teeth or the developed bones beneath it. From this it must be seen that such methods are not true methods of making over old faces.

If lines have been caused by suffering; if wrinkles are due to premature decay of the tissues; if the muscles have grown flaccid from lack of exercise and of nourishment; if the skin has become pallid or sallow from lack of fresh air and good blood, these faults can all be remedied by instituting a new régime calculated to bring about rejuvenating effects. Not only *can* these things be done, but they *have* been done, and *are being done*. How?

How did the famous beauties of the French courts retain their physical charms into comparative old age?

There are several rejuvenators, within the reach of us all, which these women possessed and unconsciously used to a greater extent than we do to-day—sunlight, fresh air, and gayety. They lived a great deal out of doors, in their gardens, and the like; they had

no artificial means of heating their houses, and so they slept in cold rooms, by which means they preserved the natural texture of the skin instead of drying it out as we do. Their lives were leisurely—they did not burn the candle at both ends; and their lives were gay, given over to cheerful enjoyments.

Now all these things are the foundations for the continuance of natural charms, and when one adds to this a real desire to guard and preserve them, one has pretty nearly arrived at their secrets of beauty.

As has been pointed out many times, the complexion is of first importance, i. e., the clearness and texture of the skin. Fresh air, sunlight, the avoidance of extremes in heat and cold, and the digestion, must all be taken into account. If any of these things are neglected the complexion suffers.

The skin is also greatly affected by the condition of the glands of the body, and this will be entered into in the next paper. When the complexion has lost its glow, there are local measures, in addition to the general hygienic ones mentioned above, that will in time restore it.

To keep the skin as soft, transparent, and active as possible is the first step toward reclaiming an old face. Powerful bleaching lotions are sometimes resorted to, but one of the surest means still employed by the French is *daily* use of almond or other meals. Friction with these meals gradually removes the outer or horny layer of the skin, and at the same time, cleanses, softens, and whitens it. When the skin is badly in need of cleansing, powdered sand may be added to the mixture. Here is a favorite formula used throughout the Continent:

Borax	1 ounce
Glycerin	2 ounces
Sand	8 ounces
Sweet almond powdered or ground almond meal	20 ounces





Dissolve the borax in the glycerin by the aid of heat; mix this thoroughly with the sand and then add the meal. The sand must be white and of the finest possible powder. This is one of the simplest formula used; others contain oil of lemon and similar ingredients calculated further to bleach and whiten the skin; or the following wash may be used:

PEROXIDE LOTION.

Glycerin.....3 ounces
Rose water.....3 ounces
Hydrogen peroxide.....1 ounce

Use absorbent cotton and allow the wash to dry in. Stronger bleaching agents are sometimes employed to peel off the scarfskin, the object being the same as that of "skinning the face." Though not quite so heroic, it is painful, as considerable redness, irritation, and tenderness must accompany the peeling process.

As age advances, the muscles of the face lose their elasticity and the tissues begin to sag; the oil glands are not so active as in youth—in fact no process in the body is—and so the skin dries out, shrivels, or shrinks. Wherever this takes place, wrinkles are formed. A smooth, un wrinkled skin can be sustained only by a fatty layer beneath it, or by actively developed muscles, or both. Now skin that is dry and shrunken can be revived with fatty creams and massage.

Heat and pressure are also valuable agents that were evidently employed by the French beauties to sustain the brilliancy of the complexion and the contour of the face and neck. These were applied by means of *beauty masks*.

The best material to use is *thick chamois skin*, and any one can make a mask to fit her features by moistening chamois skin in warm water, pressing it over the face until it takes its form, marking openings for the nostrils, and,



Lift and tense the neck muscles, point the chin over the shoulder, and twist the neck backward as far as possible.

when the mask is dry, sewing tapes on it wherever necessary to keep it in place.

Soap ages many skins, and wherever this is the case, cleansing creams should be used. After thoroughly softening and cleansing the skin, a fatty cream should be rubbed into it; the skin has absorbing properties and drinks in considerable fat if it is properly fed.

Wrinkles can be smoothed out by rubbing them vigorously in the opposite direction to that in which they have formed; going over old wrinkles lightly with the finger tips is ridiculous. Creases and crumples do not form in a day, or a week, or a year, and it takes vigorous and persistent measures to erase them. The fleshy parts of the hand are best and should be used like rollers. Mechanical rollers are of no use. The hand is the only agent because it has natural *warmth, life, pres-*

sure, force behind it. Apply the same force you would use in polishing a fine piece of bric-a-brac. Do not be afraid to use strength, but use it with judgment. Considerable fat or oil should be allowed to remain on the face, and while it is in the heated state induced by the frictional treatment, apply the mask; press it firmly down, smoothing it into position, and tie it so closely that considerable pressure is exerted.

This mask should be worn for hours, preferably during the night. The heat causes absorption of the oils and so nourishes the skin, the pressure continues the smoothing-out process; and the good effects are observed after one wearing. On taking off the mask, remove the oil from the face with a soft cloth, then dash it with cold water to tone up the tissues; follow with an astringent lotion further to support the relaxed muscles. Among the most "elegant" preparations of this kind is

STRAWBERRY LOTION.

Mashed strawberries	16 ounces
White-wine vinegar	16 ounces
Rose water	8 ounces

Mix the strawberries and vinegar, macerate for twenty-four hours, strain through muslin, and add the rose water. This delightful lotion has the further virtue of imparting a charmingly natural color to the skin. It is, of course, best made with lusciously ripe, red,

juicy berries. Allow the liquid to dry upon the skin, and then lightly dust with fine rice powder.

So much for renewing old skin; now for restoring broken-down muscles and their supporting tissues. Upon what do well-rounded muscles depend? Upon nourishment, of course; upon proper blood supply.

The muscles even of babies who suffer from malnutrition become atrophied—wasted—and the child looks like an emaciated old man. As we advance in years, the blood stream is not so rapid as in youth; waste and repair go at a much slower pace; the interchange of fluids in the tissues becomes feeble; and in consequence of all this the muscles shrink, the skin soon lies in folds or hangs in bags, and young faces grow old.

The remedy—and *there is a remedy*—lies in exercise, in systematic exercise of the muscles of the face and neck.

A number of systems have been devised for building up these structures, but they are all tedious; they require infinite patience, constant practice, and perseverance, and most of us are not gifted with the necessary amount of self-discipline to pursue them successfully. However, no one will begrudge ten minutes morning and night to a few simple exercises that will put new vigor into all muscles and so restore them



Use the sides, also the lower borders of the hands as rollers.

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Actual Size

NEW FACES FOR OLD

to comparative youthfulness. It is well to experiment before a mirror, and when the knack has been acquired, the exercises can be carried out anywhere—at night after retiring, in the morning before arising, and during the day while performing other duties that do not engross the mind.

Now it will be plain to any one that the principal movements indulged in by the muscles of the face are those of laughing and chewing; therefore, the first exercise consists in throwing the face into a state of vigorous laughter. Hold the muscles in this position and subject them to strong massage. Pursue this even to the extent of laughing silently with the body muscles, which has the effect of forcing the breath out in jerks that puff out the cheeks. Encourage this to the utmost, as thereby the deep-seated muscles of the cheeks and throat are got into action. Now play upon these, while they are thus vibrating, with forcible massage.

Follow this with the chewing exercise, which should resemble the efforts of a small boy at breaking open a walnut several sizes too large for his mouth. The lower or hinge jaw should be dropped to its utmost capacity, thereby surprising into activity the lazy muscles of the jaw; in an effort to close the side teeth upon an imaginary walnut, the tissues should be tensed and "humped up" on that side; while in this state, they should be vigorously kneaded and rubbed. The same process should be pursued on the other side. At first this jaw-breaking exercise will be unpleasant, but when the cheeks begin to fill out and the chin becomes firmer, no coaxing to keep up the treatment will be necessary.

The muscles below the jaw—even

though baggy—and of the neck—although they show every evidence of age in broken-down tissues—can be restored in the same manner by systematic exercise.

The function of the neck is to support and to act as a pivot for the head. Its movements are three: flexion, extension, and rotation from side to side.

Let the head fall back in a relaxed manner. Then throw the muscles into a state of tension, raise the head and lift it in this tensed condition as high as possible; then forcibly twist it to one side, tensing the muscles as much as possible; then relax and pursue the treatment on the other side. This exercise is tiresome at first, but as the tissues gain in strength and begin to fill out, it becomes easy, and fifty "turns" are done before one knows it; in fact, the difficulty then is to avoid overdoing it.

The fluids of the body are propelled along by continual contractions and relaxations of the blood and lymph vessels. It is this constant ebb and flow, this pulsating rhythm, that we must stimulate that old muscles may take on new life, new vigor.

Impossible as it may appear, double chins, sagging cheeks, and shrunken necks can be restored to comparative youthfulness if these instructions are faithfully carried out day by day. And not this alone, but the good effect of silent laughter and the pleasant reveries induced by the chewing process stamp upon the face a new expression. Youth has been restored in the heart, and so it shines forth in the rejuvenated features and they glow with a new life.

NOTE: Formulæ for bleaching creams, lotions, and astringent washes are available to correspondents.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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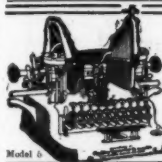
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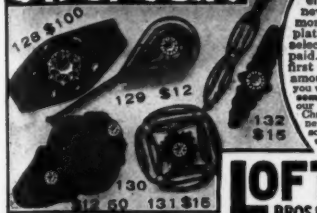
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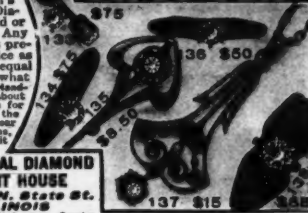
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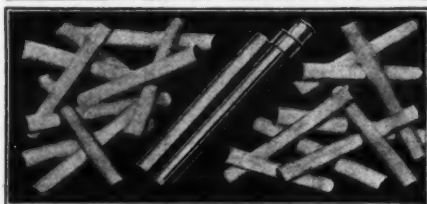
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